

COMMITTEES:

APPROPRIATIONS
BANKING
COMMERCE
INDIAN AFFAIRS
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

United States Senate

November 20, 2019

The Honorable Christopher Wray
Director, Federal Bureau of Investigations
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20535

Dear Director Wray:

I write to express concerns about the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) efforts to investigate and prevent crimes in Indian Country. Specifically, I am concerned about the FBI's willingness to offer training, resources, and assistance when crimes occur outside of an Indian reservation or Tribal land. The violence that Native people experience does not stop at Indian reservation borders, and neither do the FBI's responsibilities.

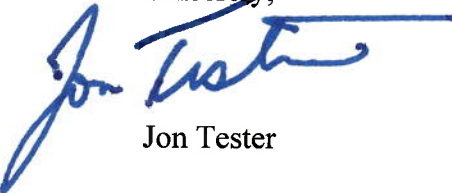
On August 29, 2019, investigators found the body of Kaysera Stops at Pretty Places in Hardin, Montana, just off of the Crow Reservation. Kaysera is at least the 27th missing or murdered Indigenous woman case in Big Horn County this year. Big Horn County, which is primarily made up of the Crow and Northern Cheyenne Reservations, has the highest rate of Missing and Murdered Indigenous People cases in Montana. And Yellowstone County, just to the north, has the second highest.

With such a high number of cases occurring short distances from Indian reservations, the FBI must be more proactive and provide all available resources to counties investigating crimes against Native Americans. Due to the urgency of this issue, I request responses to the following questions:

1. The FBI has the ability to investigate crimes that occur outside of an Indian reservation or Tribal land and to provide assistance to local jurisdictions. What resources or assistance do you provide to local jurisdictions investigating the disappearance or death of a Tribal member? Do you encourage agents to proactively offer federal assistance or resources in these cases?
2. Do you provide technical assistance or training to local jurisdictions surrounding Indian reservations or with high Native populations? Do you provide other resources to jurisdictions with a high number of crimes involving Native persons?
3. As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I have advocated for increased funding to address the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women crisis, including a \$161 million increase for the FBI in FY19. What actions have you taken to prioritize the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of crimes involving Native individuals within FBI jurisdiction? Have you increased the number of FBI agents on or near Indian reservations or Tribal land?

The federal government has a trust and treaty responsibility to keep Native communities safe. To meet this responsibility, the FBI must work with Tribes, state and local law enforcement, and surrounding communities to combat the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women crisis. I look forward to your timely response and continuing to work together to keep Indian Country safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon Tester", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jon Tester