To Serve Her State, Sen. Sinema Must Vote For Build Back Better And Its $5.2 Billion In Crucial Funding For Native American Communities

SUMMARY: After months of tense negotiations between the White House and Senator Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ), President Biden released a revised and trimmed version of his Build Back Better agenda on October 28, 2021, including crucial investments in Native American communities. On November 3, 2021, House Democrats unveiled their latest version of the Build Back Better Act, which retained previously proposed investments in Native American communities.

Senator Sinema’s state of Arizona is home to the highest number of Native Americans of any state, including the Diné people, also known as the Navajo Nation, who are the largest Native American tribe. While Senator Sinema has stalled the Build Back Better agenda, Diné community leaders, including the president of the Navajo Nation Jonathan Nez, have called on Congress to enact Build Back Better.

To serve her state and its Native American communities, Senator Sinema must vote for Build Back Better, which invests at least $5.2 billion in Native American communities. According to an Accountable.US analysis of newly released legislative text, these investments include:

- Over $2.34 billion for Native American health initiatives, including the Indian Health Service
- Over $1.67 billion for Tribal housing, infrastructure, and community development
- At least $485,600,000 for climate resilience, conservation, and drought relief specifically for Native American communities
- $200,000,000 in grants to Native American language educators
- $523,000,000 in other funding benefitting Native American communities, including funding for a Native American Consultation Resource Center


Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ) Is A Democratic Senator Representing The State Of Arizona. [Ballotpedia, accessed 10/29/21]

Late August 2021: Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ) Firmly Stated Her Opposition To The Cost Of Democrats’ Build Back Better Agenda, A Move That Threatened To "Derail" President Biden's Economic Agenda. "Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona is doubling down in her opposition to the $3.5 trillion price tag of a party-line spending plan Democrats are assembling to secure much of President Joe Biden's economic agenda. It may compel Democrats to dramatically scale back their ambitions in order to get her support." [Business Insider, 08/23/21]
October 28, 2021: After “Months Of Tense Negotiations,” President Biden Released A New Version Of The Build Back Better Framework, Which Featured Cuts To Several Proposals. “President Joe Biden announced Thursday that he had reached a deal with Senate Democratic holdouts on the outlines of a $1.75 trillion social spending and climate bill. The product of months of tense negotiations between moderate and progressive lawmakers in his party, the new framework contains more details than anything else the White House has released thus far.” [CNBC, 10/28/21]

- The Cost Of The Legislation Had Been Reduced To $1.75 Trillion From $3.5 Trillion. “President Joe Biden announced Thursday that he had reached a deal with Senate Democratic holdouts on the outlines of a $1.75 trillion social spending and climate bill. [...] The current framework is far smaller than Biden’s original $3.5 trillion proposal. The House Rules Committee released a draft of the reconciliation text Thursday afternoon.” [CNBC, 10/28/21]

As Of October 28, 2021, Senator Sinema Had Neither Opposed Nor Publicly Endorsed President Biden’s Newly Released And Revised Build Back Better Framework. “This halving of the bill’s top-line cost is a concession to the austere tastes of Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema. And the framework’s details reflect those senators’ various ideological hang-ups. In effect, the Democratic leadership has put together a list of programs and tax hikes that the party’s right flank hasn’t explicitly ruled out. As of this writing, however, Manchin and Sinema have not publicly endorsed the framework either.” [New York Magazine, 10/28/21]

November 1, 2021: Democrats Were “Closing In On A Compromise” To Get Senator Sinema’s Support For Build Back Better. “Congressional Democrats say they are closing in on a compromise to change some drug pricing practices, with negotiators working through the weekend and Monday to convince key holdouts like Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.) to support the last-minute deal.” [Washington Post, 11/01/21]


As Of The 2019 American Community Survey, Arizona Was Home To The Highest Number Of Native Americans Of Any State—According To The Census, 5.3% Of Arizona’s Population Is “American Indian Or Alaska Native Alone.”

The 2019 American Community Survey Found That Arizona Had The Highest Number Of Native Americans Of Any State. [Stacker, 01/06/21]

- The U.S. Census Definition Of “Native Americans” Includes Alaskan Natives And Excludes Native Hawaiians. [Stacker, 01/06/21]

As Of 2019, There Were Approximately 332,273 Native Americans In Arizona. [Stacker, 01/06/21]

According To The U.S. Census, 5.3% Of Arizona’s Population Is “American Indian Or Alaska Native Alone.” [U.S. Census, accessed 10/29/21]

Arizona Is Home To 22 Tribes, Each With Their Own History, Culture, And Land.

There Are 22 Federally Recognized Tribes In Arizona. [Arizona Department of Education, accessed 10/29/21]

Each Of Arizona’s 22 Tribes Has Its “Own Rich History, Culture, Language And Land Base.” [Heard Museum, accessed 10/29/21]
The Diné People—Sometimes Referred To As The Navajo Nation—are the largest Native American tribe, and their reservation “sprawls across northeastern Arizona.”

The Diné People, Sometimes Referred To As The Navajo Nation, Are The Largest Native Tribe In The United States. “And during the coronavirus pandemic the Diné, as many prefer to call themselves, gained an important distinction: the most populous tribal nation in the United States. A rush to secure federal hardship benefits increased the Navajo Nation’s official enrollment to 399,494 from 306,268 last year, according to the Navajo Office of Vital Records and Identification. That jump was enough for the Diné to eclipse the Cherokee Nation, which has an enrollment of about 392,000.” [New York Times, 05/21/21]

- Diné Is Often The “Prefer[red]” Name For The People Some Refer To As The Navajo. “This site is dedicated to keeping alive the culture, traditions, and beliefs of the Diné (Navajo People) also referred to as Navajo ‘Indians’ a name not used or liked by the People. The Navajo prefer to be called the ‘Diné’ meaning ‘The People’ or ‘Children of the Holy People’” [NavajoPeople.org, accessed 10/29/21]

The Navajo Nation “Sprawls Across Northeastern Arizona, New Mexico And Utah.” “Among some 500 Indian tribes and 318 reservations recorded in the country by the 2000 Census, the Navajo Nation is the home of the largest American Indian tribe; and sprawls across northeast Arizona, New Mexico and Utah.” [Discover Navajo, accessed 10/29/21]


Jonathan Nez, The President Of Navajo Nation, Said In October 2021, “We Are Hoping The Build Back Better Initiative Will Cross The Finish Line”

Jonathan Nez Is The President Of Navajo Nation. [Office of the President and Vice President of Navajo Nation, accessed 10/29/21]

Jonathan Nez Was Born In Tuba City, Arizona. “Jonathan Nez was born in Tuba City, Arizona and raised in Shonto, Arizona. He is married to Phefelia H. Nez and they have two children, Christopher and Alexander. He is the son of John H. Nez and Mabel H. Nez. His grandfather, H.T. Donald, was the former Navajo Nation Council Delegate for Shonto Chapter, and his grandmother was Mae Donald from Shonto.” [Office of the President and Vice President of Navajo Nation, accessed 10/29/21]

Jonathan Nez In October 2021: “We Are Hoping The Build Back Better Initiative Will Cross The Finish Line.”

Lena Fowler Is On The Coconino County, Arizona Board Of Supervisors. [Coconino County Arizona, accessed 10/29/21]

Lena Fowler Was The First Diné Chairwoman Of The Coconino Board Of Supervisors. “Fowler made history in August 2011 when she became the first Diné chairwoman of the board. She ended her term in April 2012. She was elected again as chair in late February 2016 and ended her term in January 2017.” [Lake Powell Chronicle, 04/18/18]

- Diné Is The “Prefer[red]” Name For The People Some Refer To As The Navajo. “This site is dedicated to keeping alive the culture, traditions, and beliefs of the Diné (Navajo People) also referred to as Navajo ‘Indians’ a name not used or liked by the People. The Navajo prefer to be called the ‘Diné’ meaning ‘The People’ or ‘Children of the Holy People’.” [NavajoPeople.org, accessed 10/29/21]

September 20, 2021: Lena Fowler Co-Wrote An Op-Ed In The Arizona Daily Sun Calling For The Enactment Of The Build Back Better Agenda In Order To Combat "Environmental And Human Crisis." “Arizona is a prime example of a state needing every resource possible to battle this environmental and human crisis. Supporting the federal budget package in its entirety would help provide those resources and realize the Biden administration’s Build Back Better agenda. We urge U.S. Senator Kyrsten Sinema to vote in favor of the full, $3.5 trillion package.” [Arizona Daily Sun, 09/20/21]

- Lena Fowler’s Op-Ed Said “Some Of The Senate Chamber’s Swing Votes Have Said That The Cost Of The Tax And Spending Package Is Too High, But The Cost Is Far Greater For Our Communities If We Don’t Act Now.” “Some of the Senate chamber’s swing votes have said that the
cost of the tax and spending package is too high, but the cost is far greater for our communities if we don’t act now to mitigate the ever-worsening impacts of this crisis. Climate change comes with its own price tag that costs Americans their health and their hard-earned money (over half a trillion dollars in the past four years, to be exact).” [Arizona Daily Sun, 09/20/21]

- Lena Fowler’s Op-Ed Said “We Implore Senate Sinema And All Members Of Congress” To Pass The Build Back Better Package. “This is a historic moment for federal leadership, and we implore Senator Sinema and all members of Congress to support this economic package. It’s a ticket to a better, more resilient future.” [Arizona Daily Sun, 09/20/21]

President Biden’s Revised Build Back Better Act, Which Democrats Updated On November 3, 2021, Includes At Least $5.2 Billion In Funds Supporting Tribal Health, Infrastructure, Climate Resilience, And More.


President Biden’s Updated October 28, 2021 Build Back Better Framework Includes Investments In Native Communities. “Equity and Other Investments: Other targeted investments including maternal health, community violence initiatives, Native communities, disadvantaged farmers, nutrition, pandemic preparedness, supply chain resilience, and other areas.” [The White House, 10/28/21]


The Build Back Better Act, As Released On November 03, 2021, Includes At Least $2.34 Billion For Native American Health Initiatives, Including The Indian Health Service.

The Build Back Better Act Includes $945,000,000 For Maintenance And Improvement Of Facilities Operated By The Indian Health Service And Other Tribal Organizations. “SEC. 70106. INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE. 17 (a) MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT.—In addition to amounts otherwise available, there is appropriated to the Director of the Indian Health Service for fiscal year 2022, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, $945,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 2031, for maintenance and improvement of facilities operated by the Indian Health Service or an Indian Tribe or Tribal organization” [U.S. Congress, H.R.5376, pg. 885, 11/03/21]

The Build Back Better Act Includes $123,716,000 For The Indian Health Service’s Substance Abuse Treatment Programs. “MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS.—In addition to amounts otherwise available, there is appropriated to the Director of the Indian Health Service for fiscal year 2022, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, $123,716,000, to remain available until September 30, 2031, for mental health and substance use prevention and treatment services, including facility renovation, construction, or expansion relating to mental health and substance use prevention and treatment services.” [U.S. Congress, H.R.5376, pg. 886, 11/03/21]

The Build Back Better Act Includes $1,000,000,000 For Indian Health Service Facilities. “PRIORITY HEALTH CARE FACILITIES.—In addition to amounts otherwise available, there is appropriated to the Director of the Indian Health Service for fiscal year 14 2022, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, $1,000,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 2031, for projects identified through the health care facility priority system.” [U.S. Congress, H.R.5376, pg. 886, 11/03/21]
The Build Back Better Act Includes $40,000,000 To The Director Of The Indian Health Service For Small Ambulatory Construction. “SMALL AMBULATORY.—In addition to amounts otherwise available, there is appropriated to the Director of the Indian Health Service for fiscal year 2022, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, $40,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 23 2031, for small ambulatory construction.” [U.S. Congress, H.R.5376, pg. 887, 11/03/21]

The Build Back Better Act Includes $100,000,000 For Facilities Of Urban Indian Organizations. “URBAN INDIAN ORGANIZATIONS.—In addition to amounts otherwise available, there is appropriated to the Director of the Indian Health Service for fiscal year 2022, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, $100,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 2031, for the renovation, construction, expansion, equipping, and improvement of facilities owned or leased by an Urban Indian organization.” [U.S. Congress, H.R.5376, pg. 887, 11/03/21]

The Build Back Better Act Includes $25,000,000 For The Indian Health Service’s Epidemiology Centers. “In addition to amounts otherwise available, there is appropriated to the Director of the Indian Health Service for fiscal year 2022, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, $25,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 2031, for the epidemiology centers.” [U.S. Congress, H.R.5376, pg. 887, 11/03/21]

The Build Back Better Act Includes $113,284,000 For Environmental Health And Facilities Support Activities Of The Indian Health Service. “ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND FACILITIES SUPPORT ACTIVITIES.—In addition to amounts otherwise available, there is appropriated to the Director of the Indian Health Service for fiscal year 2022, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, $113,284,000, to remain available until September 30, 2031, for environmental health and facilities support activities of the Indian Health Service.” [U.S. Congress, H.R.5376, pg. 888, 11/03/21]

The Build Back Better Act Includes $75,000,000 For Grants And Contracts To Health Profession Schools, Some Of Which Supports “Indian Tribes” And “Tribal Organizations.” “In addition to amounts otherwise available, there is appropriated to the Secretary for fiscal year 2022, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise 7 appropriated, $75,000,000, to remain available until expended, for carrying out a program to award grants or contracts to health professions schools, academic health centers, State or local governments, territories, Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations, Urban Indian organizations, Native Hawaiian organizations, or other appropriate 13 public or private nonprofit entities (or consortia of any 14 such entities, including entities promoting multidisciplinary approaches), to establish or expand programs to 16 grow and diversify the maternal mental health and substance use disorder treatment workforce, including through improving the capacity and supply of health care 19 providers.” [U.S. Congress, H.R.5376, pg. 685, 11/03/21]

- *This item was not factored into the total for this section because the funding does not exclusively benefit Native Americans or tribes.*

The Build Back Better Act Includes $100,000,000 For Grants And Contracts To Community Organizations In Areas With High Rates Of Adverse Maternal Health Outcomes, Some Of Which Supports Native American Communities. “In addition to amounts otherwise available, there is appropriated to the Secretary for fiscal year 2022, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, $100,000,000, to remain available until expended, for carrying out a program to award grants or contracts to community-based organizations, Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations, Urban Indian organizations, Native Hawaiian organizations, or other nonprofit organizations working with a community-based organization, or consortia of any such entities, operating in areas with high rates of adverse maternal health outcomes or with significant racial or ethnic disparities in maternal health outcomes.” [U.S. Congress, H.R.5376, pg. 686, 11/03/21]

- *This item was not factored into the total for this section because the funding does not exclusively benefit Native Americans or tribes.*
The Build Back Better Act Includes $277,500,000 For Grants Toward Native American Housing Assistance Under Section 101(a) Of The Native American Housing Assistance And Self-Determination Act. “$277,500,000 for grants authorized under of section 101(a) of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 (in this section referred to as ‘NAHASDA’) (25 U.S.C. 2 4111(a)), and the Secretary shall distribute such amount according to the same funding formula used in fiscal year 2021;” [U.S. Congress, H.R.5376, pg. 778, 11/03/21]

- The Native American Housing Assistance And Self Determination Act (NAHASDA) Enacted A Block Grant Program For Tribal Housing Assistance. “The Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act of 1996 (NAHASDA) reorganized the system of housing assistance provided to Native Americans through the Department of Housing and Urban Development by eliminating several separate programs of assistance and replacing them with a block grant program. The two programs authorized for Indian tribes under NAHASDA are the Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) which is a formula based grant program and Title VI Loan Guarantee which provides financing guarantees to Indian tribes for private market loans to develop affordable housing. Regulations are published at 24 CFR Part 1000.” [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, accessed 10/29/21]

The Build Back Better Act Includes $200,000,000 For Grants Authorized Under Section 802(a) Of The Native American Housing Assistance And Self-Determination Act. “$200,000,000 for grants authorized under section 802(a) of NAHASDA (25 U.S.C. 4222” [U.S. Congress, H.R.5376, Pg. 779, 11/03/21]

The Build Back Better Act Includes $277,500,000 For Grants Related To Affordable Housing, Water And Energy Efficiency, And Infrastructure Resilience In Native Communities. “(3) $277,500,000 for competitive grants to eligible recipients authorized under section 101(a) of NAHASDA (25 U.S.C. 4111(a)), which may be used for— (A) new construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing; (B) improving water or energy efficiency or increasing resilience to natural hazards for housing assisted by amounts made available under this subsection; or (C) other eligible affordable housing activities under NAHASDA” [U.S. Congress, H.R.5376, Pg. 779, 11/03/21]

The Build Back Better Act Includes $200,000,000 For “Indian Community Development Block Grants.” “(4) $200,000,000 for— (A) competitive single-purpose Indian community development block grants for Indian tribes; and (B) imminent threat Indian community development block grants, including for long-term environmental threats and relocation, for Indian tribes, or a tribal organization, governmental entity, or nonprofit organization designated by the Indian tribe to apply for a grant on its behalf” [U.S. Congress, H.R.5376, Pg. 780, 11/03/21]

The Build Back Better Act Includes $715,400,000 For The Bureau Of Indian Affairs Road System And Tribal Transportation Facilities. “In addition to amounts otherwise available, there is appropriated to the Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs for fiscal year 2022, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, $715,400,000, to remain available until September 30, 2026, for the Bureau of Indian Affairs Road System and Tribal transportation facilities” [U.S. Congress, H.R.5376, Pg. 890, 11/03/21]

The Build Back Better Act, As Released On November 3, 2021, Includes At Least $485,600,000 For Climate Resilience, Conservation, And Drought Relief Specifically For Native Communities.

The Build Back Better Act Includes $441,000,000 For Tribal Climate Resilience. “SEC. 70101. TRIBAL CLIMATE RESILIENCE. 16 (a) TRIBAL CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION.—In addition to amounts otherwise available, there is appropriated to the Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs for fiscal year 2022, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, $441,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 2031, for Tribal climate resilience and adaptation programs.” [U.S. Congress, H.R.5376, Pg. 879, 11/03/21]

The Build Back Better Act Includes $19,600,000 For Fish Hatchery Operations And Maintenance Programs Of The Bureau Of Indian Affairs. “BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS FISH HATCHERIES.—In
addition to amounts otherwise available, there is appropriated to the Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs for fiscal year 2022, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, $19,600,000, to remain available until September 30, 2031, for fish hatchery operations and maintenance programs of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.” [U.S. Congress, H.R.5376, Pg. 879, 11/03/21]

The Build Back Better Act Includes $25,000,000 For Emergency Drought Relief For Tribes. “SEC. 70104. EMERGENCY DROUGHT RELIEF FOR TRIBES. In addition to amounts otherwise available, there is appropriated to the Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation for fiscal year 2022, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, $25,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 2026, for near-term drought relief actions to mitigate drought impacts for Indian Tribes that are impacted by the operation of a Bureau of Reclamation water project, including through direct financial assistance to address drinking water shortages and to mitigate the loss of Tribal trust resources.” [U.S. Congress, H.R.5376, Pg. 883, 11/03/21]

The Build Back Better Act, As Released On November 3, 2021, Includes $200,000,000 In Grants To Native American Language Educators.

The Build Back Better Act Includes $200,000,000 For Grants To Native American Language Educators. “In addition to amounts otherwise available, there is appropriated for fiscal year 2022, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, to remain available until September 30, 2031, $200,000,000 for the Secretary, in carrying out section 803C, to award grants to carry out activities relating to preparing, training, and offering professional development to Native American language teachers and Native American language early childhood educators to ensure the survival and continuing vitality of Native American languages.” [U.S. Congress, H.R.5376, Pg. 75, 11/03/21]

The Build Back Better Act, As Released On November 3, 2021, Includes $523,000,000 In Other Funding Benefitting Native American Communities, Including Funding For A Native American Consultation Resource Center And Public Safety And Justice Programs.

The Build Back Better Act Includes $33,000,000 To Establish And Administer A Native American Consultation Resource Center. “In addition to amounts otherwise available, there is appropriated to the Secretary of the Interior for fiscal year 2022, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, $33,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 2031, to establish and administer a Native American Consultation Resource Center (the authority for which shall expire on September 30, 2031) to provide training and technical assistance to support Federal consultation and coordination responsibilities.” [U.S. Congress, H.R.5376, Pg. 883, 11/03/21]

The Build Back Better Act Includes $490,000,000 For Public Safety And Justice Programs In Native American Communities. “PUBLIC SAFETY AND JUSTICE.—In addition to amounts otherwise available, there is appropriated to the 6 Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs for fiscal year 2022, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, $490,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 2031, for public safety and justice programs and construction.” [U.S. Congress, H.R.5376, Pg. 889, 11/03/21]