



**Statement from South Dakota Tribal Education Directors on Executive Order 14242,**  
*Eliminating the U.S. Department of Education*

April 10, 2025

We, the undersigned Tribal Education Directors—appointed by the nine federally recognized Tribal Nations located within South Dakota—serve as the designated education authorities for our sovereign governments. Together, we unequivocally oppose Executive Order 14242, *Eliminating the U.S. Department of Education*, which was issued on March 20, 2025, without Tribal consultation. This action represents not only a betrayal of trust but a direct violation of the United States government’s legal and moral obligations to our Nations and youth.

More than 90% of Native students in South Dakota, including those from the Oceti Sakowin Nations, attend public schools that depend on U.S. Department of Education funding. These funds are critical to the delivery of Title programs, Native language preservation, Impact Aid, early childhood and special education, and access to higher education. Eliminating the Department would sever an essential federal mechanism for oversight, fairness, and accountability—leaving our students vulnerable to systems that have historically excluded, ignored, or harmed them.

Executive Order 14242 reassigns core education programs to agencies with neither the expertise nor the statutory mandate to uphold the federal trust responsibility to Tribal Nations. The proposed reorganization lacks clarity and consistency, placing programs like Impact Aid under the Department of Defense in Senator Round’s proposal, and under the Department of the Treasury or Small Business Administration in others. **These are not discretionary programs**—they are federal obligations rooted in law, treaty, and trust. Transferring them to agencies unfamiliar with their legal foundations threatens mismanagement, delays, and the erosion of direct accountability to Tribal governments.

**The trust and treaty obligations of the federal government in Indian education are not aspirational. They are the law.** They are codified in statutes including the **Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (P.L. 93-638)** and the **Tribally Controlled Schools Act (P.L. 100-297)**—laws that mandate direct support to Tribal governments. These responsibilities cannot be delegated to the states. The federal government must maintain a direct, government-to-government relationship with Tribes. Block grants, restructuring, or agency transfers do not—and cannot—absolve the United States of its binding legal duties.

This Executive Order was issued without any Tribal consultation, in direct violation of federal policies and executive directives that require meaningful engagement with Tribal governments on matters that affect our citizens. The failure to consult is not a bureaucratic oversight—it is a fundamental breach of sovereignty.

At a time when Native students already endure some of the most persistent opportunity gaps in the nation, this proposal would dismantle one of the few federal structures capable of addressing those disparities. It would fragment services, weaken protections, and create confusion in the delivery of essential educational supports.

**This is not reform. This is erasure.**

We call on every member of Congress to act swiftly and decisively:

- Block implementation of Executive Order 14242.
- Protect the U.S. Department of Education from dissolution.
- Affirm the federal government’s ongoing responsibility to Native students and sovereign Tribal Nations.

Anything less is not only unjust—it is unlawful. We will not stand by as promises made to our Nations are broken. Our students deserve more than symbolic inclusion—they deserve the full force of the federal commitments made to them through law, treaty, and trust.

Sincerely,

South Dakota Tribal Education Directors

Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Tribal Education Director

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Date:

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Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Tribal Education Consultant

Signature:

Date:

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Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Tribal Education Director

Signature:

Date:

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Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Tribal Education Director

Signature:

Date:

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Oglala Sioux Tribe, Tribal Education Director

Signature:

Date:

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Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Tribal Education Director

Signature:

Date:

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Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate, Tribal Education Director

Signature:

Date:

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Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Tribal Education Director

Signature:

Date:

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Yankton Sioux Tribe, Appointed Education Representative

Signature:

Date:

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