



United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Resources, Community, and
Economic Development Division

B-266078

October 6, 1995

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman, Committee on Indian Affairs
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As part of the oversight by the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs of the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), you asked that we provide information on staffing at BIA in recent years. At the request of your office, we are providing BIA's data on (1) end-of-fiscal-year staffing, (2) the number of vacant positions in BIA on various dates, (3) occupations that have the highest number of vacant positions, and (4) the number of vacant positions in law enforcement and social services.

The enclosed data were taken from (1) readily available documents¹ produced from a computerized database containing information on BIA's personnel and positions and (2) BIA's annual budget justifications. BIA management uses the computerized data system to generate a variety of recurring reports on the agency's staffing, such as organization rosters and reports on onboard staffing levels and average grade levels. The system also contains data on vacant positions. A position is considered vacant when a new position is approved but not yet filled or an individual vacates an existing position. The computerized system treats the position as vacant until filled or an action is taken specifically to purge the vacancy from the system.

In summary, BIA's budget data show that the agency had about 14,600 and 13,700 employees on board at the end of fiscal years 1993 and 1994, respectively. As of June 15, 1995, the most recent data available in the computerized database

¹Because the information you requested was not available from the same source documents, some data are presented at different points in time.

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showed that BIA had 4,363 vacant positions. (See enc. I for details.) In addition, as of June 15, 1995,

- the occupations within BIA with the most vacant positions (i.e., more than 100 vacant positions per job title) were laborer, secretary, teacher, forestry aid, engineering equipment operator, forestry technician, educational aid, office automation clerk, clerk-typist, and engineering technician, and
- BIA had 193 vacant positions in law enforcement work and 76 in social service work.

We provided copies of a draft of this report to the Department of the Interior for its review and comment. In commenting, the Deputy Commissioner for Indian Affairs cautioned against drawing conclusions from the data. The Deputy Commissioner stated that the personnel system database has not been updated for a number of years and contains outdated and inaccurate data and pointed out that there are seasonal fluctuations in employment for a variety of professions. Finally, the Deputy Commissioner said that, in conjunction with a reduction in force anticipated in fiscal year 1996, BIA will update the records in the personnel system to purge outdated and inaccurate data to reflect actual vacancies in funded positions. A complete copy of the Deputy Commissioner's comments is included as enclosure II.

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We performed our work between May and September 1995 at BIA's Division of Personnel Management in Washington, D.C. We did not independently verify the information in the computerized database. We conducted our work in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Should you or your staff have any questions about information in this report or need more information, please call me at (202) 512-8021.

Sincerely yours,



Barry T. Hill
Associate Director, Natural Resources
Management Issues

EMPLOYEES AND VACANT POSITIONS
AT THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

Table I.1: The Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) Onboard Employees by Grade Level

Grade level	Number on board as of end of fiscal year					
	Actual					Estimated
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Executive service						
ES-6	1	1	1	1	1	1
ES-5	3	5	4	4	1	1
ES-4	5	6	6	11	7	6
ES-3	2	6	7	1	1	1
ES-2	6	3	2	1	2	2
ES-1	3	1	2	4	6	11
Executive service subtotal	20	22	22	22	18	22
General schedule						
GS/GM-15	48	50	65	62	55	49
GS/GM-14	201	213	230	215	185	168
GS/GM-13	403	430	491	405	378	342
GS-12	744	834	789	771	705	646
GS-11	1,400	1,384	958	897	795	758
GS-10	63	374	83	37	37	34
GS-9	1,803	1,698	1,463	705	644	637
GS-8	166	401	474	192	179	175
GS-7	756	830	1,323	658	641	628
GS-6	663	655	892	569	539	524
GS-5	1,641	1,380	1,379	1,175	1,183	1,165
GS-4	1,864	1,590	1,684	1,149	1,319	1,309
GS-3	1,020	978	865	282	578	576
GS-2	200	225	1,495	15	122	122
GS-1	2	1	4	0	0	0
General schedule subtotal	10,974	11,043	12,195	7,132	7,360	7,133

Grade level	Number on board as of end of fiscal year					
	Actual					Estimated
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Education pay system						
CE/CY 1-8				3,364	2,515	2,560
CE/CY 11-17				1,636	1,541	1,550
CE/CY 21-24				76	85	90
Education pay system subtotal				5,076	4,141	4,200
Ungraded	2,925	3,073	2,553	2,338	2,190	2,138
Total	13,919	14,138	14,770	14,568	13,709	13,493

Source: BIA's budget justifications for fiscal year 1992 through fiscal year 1996.

Table I.2: Vacant Positions in BIA, December 1989 and at Various Times in 1994 and 1995

BIA location	Number of vacant positions as of					
	12/2/89 ^a	4/2/94	7/9/94	1/7/95	4/1/95	6/15/95
Aberdeen	84	70	24	110	153	166
Albuquerque	46	168	237	195	216	250
Anadarko	13	53	101	69	85	68
Billings	86	645	355	627	707	604
Central Office	135	418	515	481	503	558
Eastern	24	47	61	71	79	86
Haskell and SIPI ^b	0	53	69	98	72	82
Juneau	30	131	124	151	164	165
Minneapolis	18	210	247	172	176	185
Muskogee	5	28	47	45	53	59
Navajo	149	837	986	1,149	965	1,078
Phoenix	172	705	740	696	854	854
Portland	81	341	330	318	229	176
Sacramento	40	103	123	146	10 ^c	32
Total	883	3,809	3,959	4,328	4,266	4,363

^aAs BIA reported to the Congress. These figures are included to provide reference points for the figures at subsequent times.

^bHaskell Indian Nations University; Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute.

^cThe change in the number of vacant positions from January to April 1995 occurred because personnel functions for the Sacramento Area Office were transferred to the Bureau of Reclamation Interagency Human Resource Center from the BIA Phoenix Area Office in February 1995. At the time of the transfer, the number of vacant positions was reduced to zero.

Source: GAO's analysis of BIA's data.

Table I.3: Job Titles in BIA With More Than 100 Vacant Positions, as of June 15, 1995

Job title	Number of vacant positions	Top two locations for vacant positions - number of positions
Laborer	222	Navajo - 89 Billings - 60
Secretary	218	Central Office - 91 Phoenix - 30
Teacher	211	Navajo - 145 Phoenix - 39
Forestry aid	178	Phoenix - 72 Billings - 57
Engineering equipment operator	167	Billings - 68 Navajo - 39
Forestry technician	156	Phoenix - 68 Billings - 36
Educational aid	128	Navajo - 98 Phoenix - 21
Office automation clerk	127	Central Office - 38 Navajo - 27
Clerk typist	118	Phoenix - 29 Juneau - 24
Engineering technician	104	Navajo - 42 Billings - 16
Total	1,629	

Note: The job series for these 10 job titles had a total of 1,899 vacant positions, or about 44 percent of all of the vacant positions identified. The 1,629 vacant positions for these job titles represent about 37 percent of BIA's total number of vacant positions, 4,363.

Source: GAO's analysis of BIA's data.

Table I.4: Vacant Positions in Law Enforcement and Social Services in BIA, as of June 15, 1995

Job title - number of vacant positions	Locations with 5 or more vacant positions
Law enforcement - 193	
Police officer - 97	Phoenix - 32 Billings - 31 Albuquerque - 13 Aberdeen - 9 Minneapolis - 5
Security guard - 50	Billings - 20 Minneapolis - 7 Navajo - 7 Phoenix - 6
Criminal investigator - 46	Phoenix - 17 Central Office - 11
Social services - 76	
Social service representative - 30	Billings - 8 Juneau - 5 Phoenix - 5
Social worker - 26	Albuquerque - 6 Phoenix - 6 Central Office - 5
Social service assistant - 8	
Social services aid - 3	
Student trainee (social work) - 3	
Child welfare specialist - 4	
Counseling assistant - 1	
School social worker - 1	

Source: GAO's analysis of BIA's data.

COMMENTS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
Washington, D.C. 20240

SEP 28 1995



Mr. James Duffus III
Director, Natural Resources Management Issues
United States General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Duffus:

Now GAO/RCED-96-14R. We have received a copy of GAO's draft report entitled Vacant Positions in the Bureau of Indian Affairs (GAO/RCED-95-279R). While the data reflected in the report comes from an earlier report to Congress and from the Department of the Interior's official payroll and personnel system, we are concerned that readers might draw inappropriate conclusions since there was no analysis of the data. For this reason, we request that the following be included in the report:

In response to the draft report, the Bureau of Indian Affairs indicated that readers should use extreme caution in attempting to draw any conclusions from the data presented. The BIA has large seasonal fluctuations in employment, such as --


- contract educators and school support staff who work from August to May;
- road maintenance and road construction employees who work mainly during the summer months;
- irrigation ditch riders who are employed only during the growing season;
- firefighters whose employment is dictated by where and when forest fires occur; and
- laborers hired during summer months to repair and renovate schools and other facilities.

Further, the positions listed in the personnel system have not been routinely updated for a number of years. The system contains positions which are not funded, duplicate positions, and positions whose functions have been assumed by successor positions. The unfunded positions may include former federal employees displaced through tribal contracts and compacts whose positions should have been deleted from BIA's personnel records.

There will be a substantial reduction in BIA employment as a result of Congressional action on the FY 1996 budget. In conjunction with a Reduction-in-Force, the BIA will update the records in the personnel system to purge outdated and inaccurate data. Once this process is completed, future reports from the personnel system should more accurately reflect actual vacancies in funded positions.

Your consideration of this request is appreciated. Questions regarding this issue may be directed to Linda Richardson, Director, Office of Audit and Evaluation at (202)208-1916.

Sincerely,


Hilda Manuel
Deputy Commissioner of Indian Affairs

(140340)

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