



Confirmation Hearing of William “Billy” Kirkland



Billy Kirkland during his confirmation hearing on Thursday, July 17, 2025.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – On Thursday, July 17, 2025, William “Billy” Kirkland attended a hearing to consider his nomination for the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs position within the Department of the Interior.

Along with Kirkland and family members supporting his nomination, the Speaker of the Navajo Nation Council attended the hearing. U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Senator Brian Schatz (D-HI), Senator Steve Daines (R-MN), Senator Ben Ray Luján (D-NM), Senator Catherine Cortez-Masto (D-NV), Senator Markwayne Mullin (R-OK), and Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) were present and questioned Kirkland on his intentions if confirmed.

Kirkland would be the first Navajo to hold this position. He was born North of the Navajo Nation and moved around during his childhood due to his father’s military career. In his testimony, he discussed the impact his mother had on him, teaching him about his history, heritage, and clans.

When questioned about his qualifications, he recounted his background in managing governors, legislators, and county commissioners. Senator Daines acknowledged his

leadership capabilities that will help him in overseeing the thousands of employees who will be under his jurisdiction. He also underscored the importance of collaborating with tribal leaders to combat problems that they are well-versed in.

Senator Daines highlighted that the top concern for Indian Country is public safety. He stated, “death in Indian Country is three times the average in Montana,” leading to the Senator asking Kirkland if he would help him in enhancing public safety and assisting tribal law enforcement in getting the resources needed. Kirkland confirmed that “it is a top priority in the current administration,” and is looking forward to working with Senator Daines on this issue.

The problems associated with current budget cuts affecting Indian country were addressed in the hearing to which Kirkland stated, “Tribal nations have always been asked to do more with less.” He hopes to collaborate with tribes and issue experts to ensure the budget cuts do not negatively impact tribal safety.

If confirmed, Billy Kirkland committed to work together, along with Secretary Doug Burgum, to enhance public safety, work with Congress to meet past treaty obligations, ensure money is correctly allocated to tribes, address water rights settlements, work to increase transparency within the Department of the Interior, and work with tribes to find the answers to problems brought forth.