

Dear Ms. Hultman:

I was recently assigned to staff the State-Tribal Relations Committee, which has a meeting scheduled next Thursday, September 24th, beginning at 1 p.m. Rep. Bordeaux, who is the committee chairman, requested me to reach out to you on his behalf to invite you to attend and present information pertaining to unemployment issues related to Native Americans as more specifically described below. You would be able to attend in-person or remotely through Microsoft Teams.

The unemployment issues related to Native Americans that you are requested to present information on are as follows:

- 1) Unemployment benefits distributed to Native Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic who reside in either reservations or larger communities (e.g., Sioux Falls, Rapid City, Watertown, etc.); [The latest data available for July 2020 shows 9.8% of UI claimants identified as either Native American or Alaskan Native. We do not have community specific data.](#)
- 2) Unemployment statistics of Native Americans residing in South Dakota and the standard that was used for measuring unemployment (i.e., the criteria that must be met for someone to be considered “unemployed” in South Dakota); [The Unemployment Rate used consistently across the nation and in SD is measured using the following criteria: individual is jobless, actively looking for a job, and available for work. This is the standard used since the 1930’s. This data is developed in cooperation with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.](#)
1. [Insight as to why the Bureau of Indian Affairs has been reporting unemployment numbers that are substantially greater than the numbers being reported by the state \(for instance, does the BIA use criteria for measuring unemployment that is different from the state\); I am not familiar with the method used by the BIA. Please keep in mind the definition above does not include everyone who may not be working. Individuals may not have a job, but don’t meet the other two criteria to be included as ‘unemployed’ for a host of reasons. Such individuals would be considered as not in the workforce.](#)
- 3) The data and/or other inputs that led South Dakota to reject the \$300 weekly enhanced unemployment benefit offered by the federal government.
[“Despite significant disfunction in Congress, President Trump continues to problem solve and provide great leadership during this recovery effort,” said Governor Noem. “My administration is very grateful for the additional flexibility that this effort would have provided, but South Dakota is in the fortunate position of not needing to accept it. South Dakota’s economy, having never been shut down, has recovered nearly 80% of our job losses. South Dakota is the only state in the nation that didn’t have extended benefits kick in because our insured unemployment rate has been the lowest in the nation. We have the third best housing construction market in the country. And many, many businesses are looking to relocate to South Dakota because of the decisions we made during the pandemic. South Dakota is open for business – that applies to our business owners and their employees.”](#)

Would you please let me know at your earliest opportunity whether you will be able to present some or all of the above information at the September 24th committee meeting and whether you will be attending in-person or remotely through Microsoft Teams?