

## Udall, Heinrich push for funding to combat opioid crisis

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Tom Udall, vice chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, and Martin Heinrich urged Senate leaders March 14 to prioritize robust, direct funding to tribal communities to address the ongoing opioid epidemic in Native American communities.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, American Indians and Alaska Natives had the highest overdose death rates of any group in 2015 and the largest percentage change in the number of opioid-related deaths over time.

In a letter sent to the leadership of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee, Udall, Heinrich, and a group of Senate Democrats pointed to the steep increase in opioid overdoses on reservations and the pressing need for strengthened federal support to address long-term recovery efforts and prevent further deaths. The senators also addressed the opioid epidemic's strain on Tribal resources and its negative effects on entire communities.

In addition to Udall and Heinrich, the letter was signed by U.S. Senators Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-Nev.), Jon Tester (D-Mont.), Kamala Harris (D-Calif.), Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), Tina Smith (D-Minn.), Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), and Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.).

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