# POSITION DESCRIPTION

# Assistant secretary of indian affairs, Department of the interioR

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| **OVERVIEW** | |
| Senate Committee | Indian Affairs[[1]](#endnote-1) |
| Agency Mission | The Department of the Interior protects and manages the nation’s natural resources and cultural heritage; provides scientific and other information about those resources; and honors its trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives and affiliated island communities. |
| Position Overview | The mission of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs is to oversee and protect more than 55 million acres of land held in trust by the United States for American Indian and Alaska Native tribes, and uphold the federal government’s statutory and treaty responsibilities to those communities.  The assistant secretary of Indian affairs acts as a liaison between 567 American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and the federal government and principally oversees the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Indian Education. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs also is the focal point for policymaking regarding tribal nations. |
| Compensation | Level IV $155,500 (5 U.S.C. § 5315)[[2]](#endnote-2) |
| Position Reports to | Deputy Secretary and Secretary of Interior |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** | |
| Management Scope | The assistant secretary of Indian affairs is supported by the principal deputy assistant secretary for Indian affairs and the deputy assistant secretary for policy and economic development. The assistant secretary oversees the Bureau of Indian Affairs; the Bureau of Indian Education; the Office of External Affairs; the Office of Federal Acknowledgment; the Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development; the Office of Indian Gaming; and the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Collaborative Action. In total, the assistant secretary oversees 18 offices in Washington, D.C., as well as 12 regional offices, more than 7,000 employees and a budget in excess of $2.5 billion.[[3]](#endnote-3) |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Assists and supports the secretary of the interior in fulfilling the United States’ trust responsibility to the federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages and individual Indian trust beneficiaries, as well as in maintaining the federal-tribal, government-to-government relationship[[4]](#endnote-4) * Supervises the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Indian Education * Directly supervises federal acknowledgement of tribes; tribal self-determination and self-governance; Indian gaming; tribal economic development; and all administrative, financial and information resource management activities * Coordinates liaison efforts between the department and other federal agencies that provide services or funding to the federally recognized tribes and eligible American Indians and Alaska Natives[[5]](#endnote-5) * Works with Congress and frequently testifies before congressional committees about administration priorities and legislation |
| Strategic Goals and Priorities | [Depends on the policy priorities of the administration] |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** | |
| Requirements | * Extensive experience managing complex organizations * Experience working with American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and people * Membership in a federally recognized American Indian or Alaska Native tribe (preferred) * Subject matter expertise in federal Indian policy (preferred) |
| Competencies | * Excellent interpersonal and diplomatic skills * Willingness to travel * Written and oral communication skills * Leadership skills and ability to motivate employees * Ability to work in a complex political environment and under pressure * Negotiation and advocacy skills * Ability to be a team player, working with other federal offices with different missions to accomplish larger objectives |
| **PAST APPOINTEES** | |
| Lawrence S. Roberts (2016 to 2017, Acting) – Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs; General Counsel of the National Indian Gaming Commission; Staff of a private practice on federal Indian law and environmental matters[[6]](#endnote-6) | |
| Kevin Washburn (2012 to 2015) – Dean of University of New Mexico School of Law; Distinguished Professor of Law at the University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law; Visiting Oneida Nation Professor at Harvard Law School | |
| Donald Laverdure (2012, Acting) – Chief Legal Counsel for the Apsaalooke (Crow) Nation; Chief Justice for the Crow Tribe Court of Appeals; Director of Indigenous Law Program at the Michigan State University College of Law[[7]](#endnote-7) | |

1. Plum book [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (Public Law 115-31, May 5, 2017), contains a provision that continues the freeze on the payable pay rates for certain senior political officials at 2013 levels during calendar year 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/AS-IA/index.htm>

   <https://www.bia.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/text/idc1-033225.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/AS-IA/index.htm> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. OPM [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. <https://www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/AS-IA/index.htm> [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. <https://law.wisc.edu/news/Articles/Donald_Del_Laverdure_99_named_De_2009-08-19> [↑](#endnote-ref-7)