

**Arthur Liman Fellowship in Public Interest Law**  
Final Report

With the support of the Liman Fellowship, I spent the summer of 2012 working for the White House Domestic Policy Council (DPC). The Domestic Policy Council coordinates the development and implementation of domestic policy in the White House. The DPC collaborates with other White House offices and federal agencies to drive the President's domestic priorities and also works closely with Congress and a range of non-governmental stakeholders.

Within the Domestic Policy Council, I directly served the President's Senior Policy Advisor for Native American Affairs, Jodi Gillette, as well as Lisa Kohn, Policy Assistant for Justice and Regulatory Policy and Native American Affairs. Our policy team was in charge of developing and implementing the President's agenda related to Indian Country. Our work focused on strengthening the government-to-government relationship with Indian tribes by addressing the challenges facing tribal communities across a wide array of issues, including housing, public safety, public health, economic development, energy, transportation, telecommunications, and education.

As someone who is devoted to understanding and addressing social policy challenges, I was well situated to confront these issues. Native American communities continue to endure many hardships:

- Some reservations face unemployment rates of up to 80 percent and nearly a quarter of all Native Americans live in poverty;
- Approximately 14 percent of homes on reservations don't have electricity, while 12 percent don't have access to a safe water supply;
- The dropout rate among American Indian/Alaska Native youth (aged 16-24) is almost twice the national average;

- The suicide rate for Native American youth ages 15-24 is three-and-a-half times the national average, making suicide the second leading cause of death among this age group;
- Native Americans die of illnesses like tuberculosis, alcoholism, diabetes, pneumonia, and influenza at far higher rates than the rest of the population;
- Native American children suffer from obesity and type-II diabetes at a rate two to three times more than any other racial or ethnic group;
- There is minimal access to Broadband in Indian Country. The best evidence indicates that the broadband deployment rate on Tribal lands is less than 10 percent, and anecdotal evidence suggests that actual usage rates may be as low as 5 to 8 percent, compared to 65 percent nationwide;
- Some tribes have experienced rates of violent crime twice, four times, and at times more than 10 times the national average;
- Most tragic is the fact that one in three Native women will be raped in their lifetimes.

In working to address these issues, I conducted research and provided substantive guidance to DPC staff, briefed the Senior Policy Advisor for Native American Affairs, drafted blog posts, briefing memos, remarks, and talking points, and attended meetings and conference calls with agency colleagues and interested outsiders. I also helped convene and coordinate interagency working groups on Administrative Flexibility and federal policy related to Native American sacred sites, assisted in efforts to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act, and began drafting a comprehensive report on Native American issues to be released later this year.

One particular experience that I will always remember is meeting with a group of Native American women about reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. Native American women suffer among the highest rates of domestic violence. A recent Center for Disease Control (CDC) study found that 46 percent of Native American women have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime. Listening to the stories of these tribal leaders opened my eyes to one of

the most important and difficult challenges demanding attention within tribal communities and taught me about the unique political relationship between federally recognized Indian tribes and the U.S. government. The depth and complexity of this public safety challenge was shocking, but it motivated me to confront and solve such issues in a way that I have rarely experienced.

My time at the Domestic Policy Council allowed me to learn a tremendous amount about policy formation in the White House and the legal issues inherent in policy implementation. I expect this experience to motivate and inform my research, dissertation, and future work as a legal practitioner and scholar. Importantly, I hope to continue engaging these issues as I begin law school at Harvard this fall.

The Liman Program provided excellent support and guidance throughout my experience. I am especially grateful to Associate Director Leslie Gerwin and the staff of the Law and Public Affairs Program at Princeton University for all of their support.