



## HB 86: Native American Library, Internet & Education

[Click here for HB 86 bill language and committee path.](#)

**Summary:** HB 86 would allocate a total of \$94.8 million is appropriated from the general fund to the Indian affairs department for expenditure in fiscal years 2021 through 2025 for the following purposes: \$65.7 million allocated to over 20 pueblos and tribes to plan, design, renovate, expand, construct, equip and furnish libraries and education centers statewide for Indian nations. The remainder of the funding would enable indigenous schools, colleges and community learning institutions to create or improve high speed internet and purchase curriculum and other educational materials. It is well-established that indigenous communities are hampered by a lack of educational infrastructure and internet access. HB 86 has been crafted to address this disparity.

**History:** Multiple sources point to the need for expanded high speed internet in tribal NM.

- According to the [DIGITAL Reservations Act](#), proposed in July 2020, “only 65 percent of Native Americans living on Tribal lands have access to ... wireless services, leaving approximately 1.5 million people on reservations without” reliable internet.
- The percentage of households with broadband is lower in New Mexico than any state or territory except Mississippi and Puerto Rico, according to a November, 2019 [report](#) by the state Legislative Finance Committee.
- Access is particularly scarce in New Mexico’s rural areas and on Indian lands, where fewer than half of households have fixed broadband, according to a [report](#) by the Federal Communications Commission. That pattern [matches the national average](#) of only 53 percent of Native Americans on tribal lands who have access to high-speed internet.
- “Broadband has been an issue in New Mexico in rural communities, and definitely in Indian Country, for a very long time,” Haaland said in a phone interview. “The pandemic has pulled back the blanket and the sun is illuminating these disparities.”
- A lawsuit filed by the NM Center on Law & Poverty seeks to force the state to provide Wi-Fi hotspots immediately while it works to lay fiber optic cable to reach students’ homes.

### Why HB 86 Is Good for NM:

- HB 86 would create vastly expanded internet tribal access to schools, community centers and libraries, providing native students with improved internet access until larger broadband infrastructure projects can be completed to deliver internet to native homes.
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### Supporting Organizations

- New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty
- Tribal Education Alliance

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