

South Dakota Gov. Noem clashes with Sioux tribes over coronavirus checkpoints

 [foxnews.com/politics/south-dakota-gov-noem-clashes-with-sioux-tribes-over-coronavirus-checkpoints](https://www.foxnews.com/politics/south-dakota-gov-noem-clashes-with-sioux-tribes-over-coronavirus-checkpoints)

Gov. Noem's roadmap to get South Dakota 'back to normal'

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem has warned two tribal leaders she will take “necessary” legal action if the tribes don’t remove coronavirus checkpoints on their reservations.

“The State of South Dakota objects to tribal checkpoints on US and State highways regardless of whether those checkpoints take into consideration the safety measures recommended by” the South Dakota Department of Transportation, Noem wrote in letters to leaders of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe.

“Safety recommendations do not constitute consultation and they certainly do not equal agreement,” Noem added.

Both tribes have been allowing non-resident access to the reservations for essential business only -- with visitors required to fill out a health questionnaire.

SOUTH DAKOTA GOV. NOEM UNVEILS 'BACK TO NORMAL' PLAN, SAYS IT PLACES POWER IN 'HANDS OF THE PEOPLE'

Passing through the checkpoints takes “less than a minute,” Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Chairman Harold Frazier told Time magazine.

Noem cited an April memo from the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Indian Affairs in her letters that says tribes must enter into an agreement with the state government before restricting travel on U.S. highways.

“We are strongest when we work together; this includes our battle against COVID-19,” the governor said in a news release. “I request that the tribes immediately cease interfering with or regulating traffic on US and State Highways and remove all travel checkpoints.”

We are strongest when we work together. The tribes should work with us to fight #COVID19, not against their fellow South Dakotans. (2/3)

— Governor Kristi Noem (@govkristinoem) May 8, 2020

Frazier responded in a statement Friday.

"I absolutely agree that we need to work together during this time of crisis," Frazier wrote, "however you continuing to interfere in our efforts to do what science and facts dictate seriously undermine our ability to protect everyone on the reservation.

"The virus does not differentiate between members and non-members," he added. "It obligates us to protect everyone on the reservation regardless of political distinctions. We will not apologize for being an island of safety in a sea of uncertainty and death."

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— Harold Frazier, chairman, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe

Chairman Harold Frazier statement on Governor Kristi Noem letter regarding Health Checkpoints on reservation. <https://t.co/My9liO5MDx> Chairman Harold Frazier statement on Governor Kristi Noem letter regarding Health Checkpoints on reservation.

— lastrealindians.com (@lastrealindians) May 9, 2020

South Dakota is one of a handful of states that never issued a stay-at-home order, although both tribes have.

"We'd be interested in talking face to face with Governor Noem and the attorney general and whoever else is involved," Chase Iron Eyes, a spokesman for Oglala Sioux President Julian Bear Runner, said, according to the Argus Leader of Sioux Falls.

Noem "threatened the sovereign interest of the Oglala people when she issued an ultimatum," Bear Runner said on Facebook on Saturday, according to Time. "We have a prior and superior right to make our own laws and be governed by them."

He added he believes the tribe is in full compliance with the Department of the Interior's memo because the tribe hasn't "closed non-tribal roads or highways owned by the state of South Dakota or any other government."

There were at least 169 coronavirus cases among Native Americans out of 3,145 total statewide and 31 deaths as of Friday, according to the health department.