



2022 Annual Convention Tulalip, Washington

RESOLUTION #2022-38

“Support for a Comprehensive Federal Program to Coordinate Tribal Climate Relocation Efforts”

PREAMBLE

We, the members of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendant's rights secured under Indian Treaties, Executive Orders, and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and constitution of the United States and several states, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise to promote the welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) are representatives of and advocates for national, regional, and specific tribal concerns; and

WHEREAS, ATNI is a regional organization comprised of American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/AN) and tribes in the states of Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Nevada, Northern California, and Alaska; and

WHEREAS, the health, safety, welfare, education, economic and employment opportunity, and preservation of cultural and natural resources are primary goals and objectives of the ATNI; and

WHEREAS, Tribal Nations throughout the United States are experiencing climate threats such as flooding, erosion, ocean acidification, increased wildfires, extended drought, and changes in seasons that have put our homelands and our ways of life in jeopardy; and

WHEREAS, a growing number of Tribal Nations urgently need to relocate their reservations, villages and communities due to threats from erosion, flooding, permafrost degradation and other threats; and

WHEREAS, moving a Tribal community is complex, multi-layered, and resource intensive and many tribal nations do not have the necessary staff time and expertise required to coordinate such an effort; and

WHEREAS, federal relocation programs that do exist are drastically underfunded, and would only cover the cost of relocating one small Tribal community and often contain matching requirements which are not possible for many Tribal Nations; and

WHEREAS, other federal resources are not usually designed for the purpose of relocating communities, focused on other narrower funding objectives, and not aligned with the unique needs of village relocation; and

WHEREAS, waiting years and years to secure enough federal funding and coordinate these resources will be too late for many Tribes who are facing immediate threats from the impacts of the climate crisis; and

WHEREAS, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has found unmet relocation infrastructure needs of about \$3.5 billion over the next 50 years for Alaska alone and for the Lower 48, BIA found unmet relocation infrastructure needs of about \$1.4 billion;¹ and

WHEREAS, the BIA Tribal Climate Resilience Program awarded only about \$60 million in climate resilience funds over the course of nine years (2011–2020)² and the Infrastructure and Jobs Act allocated only just \$130 million which would just cover a single relocation project; and

WHEREAS, a 2020 BIA report found that “This patchwork approach leaves gaps in actions due to the criteria of each program and requirements of each (i.e. cost share, technical aptitude needed). Providing the direction for a coordinated, multi-organizational framework would help to address gaps among agency programs;”³ and

WHEREAS, the Government Accountability Office said “Unclear federal leadership is the key challenge to climate migration as a resilience strategy. Because no federal agency has the authority to lead federal assistance for climate migration, support for climate migration efforts has been provided on an ad hoc basis;”⁴ and

¹ Bureau of Indian Affs., The Unmet Infrastructure Needs of Tribal Communities and Alaska Native Villages in Process of Relocating to Higher Ground as a Result of Climate Change, at 5 (May 2020).

² *Id.*, at 4

³ *Id.*, at 6

⁴ Government Accountability Office. “A Climate Migration Pilot Program Could Enhance the Nation’s Resilience and Reduce Federal Fiscal Exposure,” GAO GAO-20-488. July 2020. Accessed at: <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-20-488>

WHEREAS, failing to provide adequate technical assistance and financial resources, is tantamount to being complicit in the disappearance of our lands, our people, and way of life; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians requests that Congress create a federal relocation coordination program that would assist Tribal communities in planned relocation efforts located in the office of the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs at the Department of Interior in coordination with the necessary federal partners; and

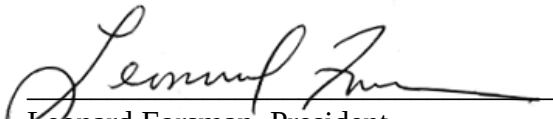
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this effort will be coordinated with ATNI's existing Climate Resiliency Program to develop a strategy ensuring that it's efforts and all planning benefit all tribes in ATNI and Indian Country; and

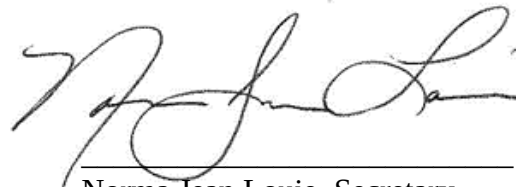
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this program should help provide planning and funding coordination as well as expedite land-into-trust applications for Tribal communities who are forced to relocate; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that Congress should provide sufficient funding so that needs of this program are adequately met by all Tribal Nations who are forced into relocation.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted at the 2022 Annual Convention of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, held at the Tulalip Resort and Casino, Tulalip, Washington, September 18-22, 2022, with a quorum present.


Leonard Forsman, President


Norma Jean Louie, Secretary