



2023 Annual Convention Grand Mound, Washington

RESOLUTION #23 – 45

“SUPPORT FOR A CALL TO CONGRESS TO SUPPORT MANDATORY APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE”

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 descendants 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 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 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 ATNI; and

WHEREAS, the United States (U.S.) has a unique and special relationship with AI/ANs to provide health care as established through the U.S. Constitution, treaties, U.S. Supreme Court decisions and federal legislation; and

WHEREAS, this relationship has resulted in the federal trust responsibility to Indian Nations, and it is a legally enforceable fiduciary obligation on the part of the U.S. to protect

Tribal treaty rights, lands, assets, and resources, as well as a duty to carry out the mandates of federal law with respect to AI/AN Tribes and villages; and

WHEREAS, in several cases discussing the trust responsibility, the Supreme Court has used language detailing the legal duties, moral obligations, and fulfillment of understandings and expectations that have been established by law between the U.S. and the Indian Nations; and

WHEREAS, as stated in treaties and other federal issuances with Indian Nations, health care is guaranteed to AI/ANs in perpetuity in exchange for the millions of acres of Indian lands that now make up the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, in 2010, the US Congress declared, “It is the policy of this Nation, in fulfillment of its special trust responsibilities and legal obligations to Indians... to ensure the highest possible health status for Indians and to provide all resources necessary to effect that policy”; and

WHEREAS, the Indian Health Service (IHS), an agency within the Department of Health and Human Services, administers health care to 2.6 million AI/ANs residing in Tribal communities across the US, directly or through contracts or compacts with Tribes and Tribal organizations under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act; and

WHEREAS, the IHS received a \$6.95 billion appropriation in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, yet the National Tribal Budget Formulation Workgroup recommends that the amount necessary to fully fund IHS is \$53.85 billion pursuant to their FY 2025 recommendation; and

WHEREAS, in FY 2017, the IHS per capita expenditures for patient health services were just \$4,078, compared to \$13,185 per person for health care spending nationally; and

WHEREAS, according to the IHS, the California Area received just \$1,813 per active Indian User in FY 2021 which is less than half of the average across all IHS Areas; and

WHEREAS, lower per-patient spending is common among IHS Areas that are not provided IHS infrastructure, such as federally funded hospitals and health clinics; and

WHEREAS, Areas without IHS facilities also receive disproportionately fewer resources from the IHS to identify their needs and deficiencies, which translates to reduced appropriations across IHS budget line items; and

WHEREAS, due to the absence of Area level staff to identify and collect this data, the needs of these Areas are not accurately accounted for by the current mandatory funding proposal; and

WHEREAS, Tribes and Tribal Health Programs cannot properly establish proper planning procedures due to the current fluctuation of funding each FY in conjunction with congressionally approved budgets and recent government shutdowns; and

WHEREAS, Tribes and Tribal Health Programs cannot recruit, maintain, and sustain staff for their clinics due to funding uncertainties; and

WHEREAS, AI/ANs continue to suffer some of the worst health disparities of all Americans, and according to IHS data, they die at higher rates than other Americans from alcoholism (552% higher), diabetes (182% higher), unintentional injuries (138% higher), homicide (83% higher), and suicide (74% higher); and

WHEREAS, AI/ANs suffer from higher mortality rates from cervical cancer (1.2 times higher), pneumonia/influenza (1.4 times higher), and maternal deaths (1.4 times higher) compared to the larger US population; and

WHEREAS, the instability of the current discretionary funding process for IHS continues to put the lives of AI/ANs at risk; and

WHEREAS, moving IHS to the mandatory side of the federal budget would stabilize the IHS budget and ensure that the care that AI/ANs need is always guaranteed; and

WHEREAS, making spending for IHS mandatory would exempt IHS from broad-based cuts in discretionary spending, and budget rescissions; and

WHEREAS, other direct health programs like the Veterans Health Administration have a mandatory spending designation; and

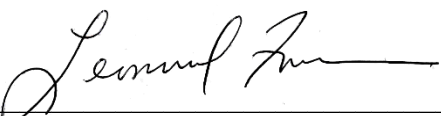
WHEREAS, IHS should be treated like the legal obligation it is, and Congress should move IHS funding to the mandatory side of the federal budget; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that ATNI urge Congress to enact mandatory appropriations for the IHS, in order to provide the highest level of health care service for all AI/ANs, as is the government’s duty to fulfill this obligation under the federal trust responsibility; and

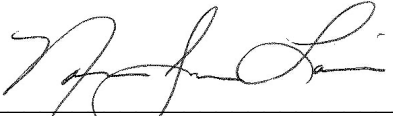
BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that Congress and the White House must ensure that the needs and deficiencies of all IHS Areas are accurately assessed prior to the adoption of a long-term Mandatory Budget.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted at the 2023 Annual Convention of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, held at the Great Wolf Lodge, Grand Mound, WA, September 18-21, 2023 with a quorum present.



Leonard Forsman, President



Norma Jean Louie, Secretary