



2023 Annual Convention Grand Mound, Washington

RESOLUTION #23 – 49

“CALL TO ACTION FOR THE PRESIDENT TO DECLARE THE OPIOID AND FENTANYL EPIDEMIC A NATIONAL EMERGENCY”

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, despite the national Covid-19 pandemic public health emergency ending, the impacts of the pandemic continue to disproportionately affect AI/AN people and the Northwest Tribes; and

WHEREAS, Tribal communities are currently experiencing poor mental health and substance use outcomes as a result of isolation from familial, social and cultural activities,

anxiety and depression, significant deaths, economic instability, and barriers accessing mental health services and substance use treatment during the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, as a result, AI/AN people in the Northwest are facing a devastating opioid and fentanyl epidemic with increased overdoses and deaths; and

WHEREAS, AI/AN people are nearly twice as likely to use illicit drugs compared to other racial groups in the U.S., and experience the highest rate of misuse for opioids, prescription pain relievers, and other prescription misuse; and

WHEREAS, the rate of drug overdose deaths, specifically for opioid and fentanyl deaths, are disproportionately higher among AI/ANs in the U.S. compared to other racial groups. Since 2018, the rate of AI/AN opioid overdose deaths nationally has increased 174%; and

WHEREAS, the death rate from drug overdose among AI/AN in Washington state is almost three (3) times the national AI/AN rate and the Washington state average; and

WHEREAS, the death rate from drug overdose among AI/AN living in Oregon is almost three (3) times higher than the Oregon state average and almost two (2) times higher than the national average; and

WHEREAS, the death rate from drug overdose among AI/AN in Idaho is almost two (2) times higher than the Idaho state average; and

WHEREAS, tribes have reported significant increase of opioid and fentanyl related overdose deaths since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, the increase in opioid and fentanyl related overdoses is correlated with increases in use of other illicit drugs such as xylazine, suicides, homelessness, child abuse and neglect, children in foster care, incarcerations, and Missing and Murdered Indigenous People; and

WHEREAS, the increase in opioid and fentanyl related overdoses is impacting tribal programs and services, including health care, public safety and tribal justice systems, child welfare, housing, social services and elder care programs, which are all under-resourced and understaffed; and

WHEREAS, tribal resources are exhausted and tribally-based treatment services with wrap around services are extremely limited and/or existing tribal treatment programs are unable to provide the wrap around services that those in treatment need to heal and remain in recovery; and

WHEREAS, many tribes across the Northwest have already declared states of emergencies because of the severity and magnitude of the opioid epidemic impacting their communities; and

WHEREAS, over one thousand (1,000) Tribal leaders, frontline workers, and federal and state policymakers met for three days in August 2023 for the first ever National Tribal Opioid Summit (Summit) that resulted in solutions and policy recommendations to address the devastating impacts of opioid and fentanyl epidemic in tribal communities; and

WHEREAS, during the three-day Summit, AI/AN people with lived experiences related to opioids and fentanyl emphasized the importance of saving lives with community wide-distribution of Narcan and fentanyl testing strips and connecting those using opioids and fentanyl with tribally-based treatment services, with wrap around services; and

WHEREAS, during the three-day Summit, Tribal leaders and community members made clear the severity and magnitude of the opioid epidemic plaguing Indian Country and the need for the President and Governors to declare a National Emergency and States of Emergency, respectively, to provide immediate relief, support, and regulatory flexibility and the need for federal, state and local officials to partner with tribes to address this epidemic; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the ATNI calls on the President of the United States to unilaterally declare a national emergency for the opioid epidemic devastating Tribal communities under the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. § 1601 et. seq., the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. § 5121 et. seq., and Public Health Service Act, 42 U.S.C. § 247d; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the ATNI requests the White House to convene a Tribal Opioid Crisis Task Force comprised of Tribal Leaders representing the 12 Indian Health Service Areas and the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Director of Office of Management & Budget, U.S. Attorney General, Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary of Education, and Secretary of the Interior to determine immediate and long term solutions to address the opioid and fentanyl epidemic; and

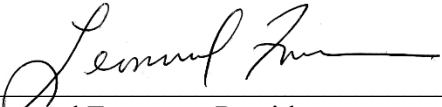
BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the ATNI calls upon the Administration to take the following immediate actions to strategically address the opioid and fentanyl epidemic and save lives:

- utilize Section 1135 of the Social Security Act waiver authority to permanently allow Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement at the Office of Management & Budget encounter rate for traditional healing and tribal based practices and all services furnished by behavioral health providers; and
- waive or create an exception for tribal treatment centers of the Institute for Mental Diseases 16 bed limitation defined in section 1905(a)(B) of the Social Security Act; and
- authorize tribes and tribal organizations to receive all federal funding through Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act Title I contracts and Title V compacts; and
- facilitate access to community-wide harm reduction training and access to supplies, including Narcan and fentanyl test strips, from the Strategic National Stockpile and Indian Health Service's National Service Supply Center; and

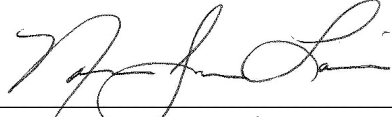
- utilize all authorities under the Stafford Act, National Emergencies Act, and Public Health Service Act, to fully fund tribally operated treatment facilities, wrap around services, and medically assisted treatment programs; streamline certification requirements for treatment facilities and Opioid Treatment Programs; and provide flexibility for Tribes to incorporate and fund tribal and cultural practices and to address social determinants of health, including transitional and permanent safe housing, food security, and training and workforce opportunities; and
- conduct ongoing tribal consultation with Tribal Nations to ensure that the needs of Tribal Nations are being addressed in all state efforts and initiatives; and
- provide other regulatory or administrative flexibility as necessary to respond to the national emergency.

CERTIFICATION

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



Leonard Forsman, President



Norma Jean Louie, Secretary