



2026 Midyear Convention Ferndale, Washington

RESOLUTION # 2026 – 023

“SUPPORTING COST-FREE MEDICARE COVERAGE FOR AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE VETERANS”

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 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 the representatives and advocates for national, regional, and specific Tribal concerns; and

WHEREAS, ATNI is a regional organization comprised of American Indian and Alaska Natives and Indian Tribal governments 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, American Indians and Alaska Native (AI/AN) people have served in the Armed Forces of the United States at higher per-capita rates than any other population group in

numerous eras of conflict, including World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, AI/AN veterans have demonstrated extraordinary service and sacrifice despite histories of federal displacement, termination policies, underfunded treaty obligations, and barriers to health care access in Tribal and rural communities; and

WHEREAS, the federal government maintains a trust and treaty responsibility to provide health care to AI/AN people, including those who are veterans, through the Indian Health Service (IHS) and through federal obligations arising from Tribal sovereignty and treaties; and

WHEREAS, many AI/AN veterans, including Tribal elders and veterans living on fixed or limited incomes, incur Medicare premiums, deductibles, copayments, and other out-of-pocket expenses that create unnecessary financial barriers to accessing medically necessary care covered under the Medicare program under title XVIII of the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. § 1395 et seq.; and

WHEREAS, the estimated annual cost of Medicare Part B premiums, deductibles, and copayments is \$2,718 in calendar year 2026, which imposes a disproportionate hardship on low-income veterans and elders; and

WHEREAS, AI/AN veterans often navigate multiple systems of care, including the Veterans Health Administration, IHS, Tribal health programs, Urban Indian Organizations, Medicare, and Medicaid, creating administrative complexity, fragmented care navigation, and inequitable cost burdens; and

WHEREAS, eliminating premiums, deductibles, and copayments associated with Medicare coverage for eligible AI/AN veterans, including veterans with service-connected disabilities and non-service-connected disabilities, recognizes the federal government's responsibility to provide health care for AI/AN veterans, honors military service, strengthens elder access to care, improves health outcomes, and advances the federal government's responsibilities to Tribal Nations; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that ATNI calls upon the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), Indian Health Service (IHS), and the United States Congress to eliminate premiums, deductibles, and copayments for Medicare Part B coverage for eligible American Indian and Alaska Native veterans who are enrolled members of federally recognized Tribes; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this will be the policy of ATNI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution(s).

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing Resolution was adopted at the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians 2026 Midyear Convention held at the Silver Reef Casino Resort in Ferndale, Washington, on May 17-21, 2026, with a quorum present.



Leonard Forsman, President



Norma Jean Louie, Secretary