2012 Mid-Year Convention
Lincoln City, Oregon

RESOLUTION #12 – 36

"SUPPORT THE CONTINUATION OF FULL MEDICAL SERVICES FOR BLACK HILLS VETERANS ADMINISTRATION MEDICAL CENTER"

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 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 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, ATNI has, since its founding, placed the needs of Native American Veterans as one of its highest priorities; and

WHEREAS, ATNI has had a rich and storied history in advocating for Native American Veterans and protecting their needs; and

WHEREAS, ATNI views the diminishment of veteran services anywhere as a threat to veteran services everywhere; therefore, ATNI is highly concerned for the needs of Native American Veterans throughout all of Indian country; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable Eric Shinseki, Secretary of Department of Veterans Affairs, has advanced a proposal that would drastically reduce medical services at the Black Hills VA Medical Center in Hot Springs, South Dakota; and

WHEREAS, the reduction of these services will adversely affect over 10,000 Lakota veterans who reside near the VA Medical Center in Hot Springs; and

WHEREAS, the proposed reconfiguration of the entire Black Hills Health Care System (BHHCS) will force all veterans who previously utilized the Black Hills VA Medical Center in Hot Springs to be burdened by significant travel, expense, and loss of time jeopardizing their health and causing duress; and

WHEREAS, the National American Indian Veterans, Inc. led by National Commander Don Loudner oppose, through Resolution No. 2012-01, the proposed reconfiguration of the BHHCS and Lakota veteran organizations throughout the Great Sioux Reservation and Treaty territory are united in their opposition to the reconfiguration proposal; and

WHEREAS, ATNI views access to VA medical services as a solemn promise of the United States of America made to all veterans, also, a trust responsibility to Native American Veterans who served their country; a promise that must be upheld; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that ATNI does hereby stand in unity with Lakota veterans who are opposing the proposed reconfiguration; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI does hereby formally request that the Honorable United States Senator Patty Murray, Chairperson of the United States Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, hold a hearing to provide Congressional oversight on the issue of rural VA medical services and that Indian country be included in such a hearing; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the ATNI Veterans Committee requests that ATNI send a letter to Chairperson Murray requesting a hearing on this crucial issue at the earliest possible date and that ATNI encourages its member tribes especially those in Washington State to advance similar letters to Chairperson Murray; and

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

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted at the 2012 Mid-Year Convention of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, held at Chinook Winds Casino Resort, Lincoln City, Oregon on May 21 – 24, 2012, with a quorum present.

Fawn Sharp, President

Norma Jean Louie, Secretary