



2016 Mid-Year Convention Grand Ronde, Oregon

RESOLUTION #16 - 24

“OPPOSITION TO VOUCHER PROGRAMS: EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS IN BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION SCHOOLS”

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, Education Savings Accounts (ESAs), such as those operated in Arizona and Nevada, are similar to a checking account with up to 90 % of the state funding that would have been received by the K-12 public school the student previously attended; and

WHEREAS, under this program, parents receive a debit card to cover the cost of multiple education expenses, including private school tuition, online school expenses, textbooks, and tutoring from public school funding; and

WHEREAS, if ESAs are expanded to Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) students, up to 90% of the per-pupil-expenditure that BIE would spend on a BIE-funded school, could be used to pay for educational expenses at a private school; and

WHEREAS, despite the pressing need for funding parity and equitable access, historical funding trends illustrate that the federal government has been abandoning its trust responsibility by not fully funding BIE; and

WHEREAS, as written, there is no distinction between BIE operated and funded schools – so that critical funding may be repurposed from tribally controlled schools as well; and

WHEREAS, tribes have overwhelmingly advocated for a tribally driven education as the best framework for educating Native students; and

WHEREAS, programs such as ESAs undermine a tribally driven education as they draw funding from these schools to cover other educational expenses that do not require consultation with tribes; and

WHEREAS, research shows the school performance of Native students has improved when they receive a tribally driven education; and

WHEREAS, with the increase of test scores and proficiency in an environment that is most inherent to Native students, a continued investment in supporting community driven initiatives and schools is warranted; and

WHEREAS, despite many independent studies of voucher programs across the country, there is no clear evidence that vouchers improve educational outcomes for participants; and

WHEREAS, studies of school districts throughout the country show no significant test score gains in districts with voucher programs; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that ATNI reaffirms its commitment to a tribally controlled education; and

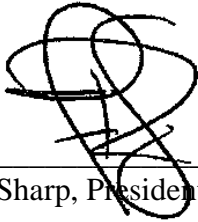
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI opposes voucher programs such as ESAs for students attending BIE funded schools as a mechanism to better support Native students; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that ATNI urges the National Indian Education Association, National Advisory Council on Indian Education, National Congress of

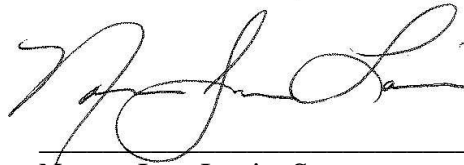
American Indians, and the Bureau of Indian Education to oppose voucher programs for BIE students and make specific recommendations such as investing in a tribally driven education to best support Native students.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted at the 2016 Mid-Year Convention of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, held at the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Spirit Mountain Casino, Grand Ronde, Oregon on May 23-26, 2016, with a quorum present.



Fawn Sharp, President



Norma Jean Louie, Secretary