

# National Indian Health Board



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**Leaders Defend Indian Health Care on Capitol Hill**  
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Washington, DC—Members of the Board of Directors to the National Indian Health Board met Wednesday with key Members of Congress to support and protect the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA)—and in it, the permanent reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA)—as well as Indian Health Service appropriations for Fiscal Years 2011 and 2012.

Members of National Indian Health Board's Board of Directors carrying this message included:

- NIHB Chairperson and Bemidji Area Representative, Cathy Abramson – Sault Ste. Marie Chippewa Indians  
Sault Ste. Marie Tribes Board of Directors representing Unit 1 – *Tribal Board Member & Treasurer*
  
- Lester Secatero - Tó'Hajiilee Band of Navajos  
Albuquerque Area Representative  
Albuquerque Area Indian Health Board – *Chairperson*
  
- Andrew Joseph, Jr. - Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation  
NIHB Member at Large and Portland Area Representative  
Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board - *Chairperson*  
Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation - *Tribal Council Member*
  
- L. Jace Killsback - Northern Cheyenne Tribe  
MT/WY (Billings) Area Representative  
Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council Member – *Busby District*

Although the primary statutory vehicle for Native health care, IHCA had not been reauthorized for over a decade until it was permanently reauthorized in the PPACA last March. The passage of PPACA and the reauthorization of IHCA represent a jump into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century for tribal health and tribal health care providers. Among other things, new provisions in these acts provide a long overdue expansion of preventive services, establish long-term care facilities, assist elders with prescription drug costs, and increase eligibility across generations. However, the newly elected majority in the House of Representatives is intent on repealing PPACA and with it, IHCA.

As House Members prepared for a vote on repeal today, Members of NIHB took to Capitol Hill to let Congress know how much PPACA and IHCA mean to Indian Country. “Tribes throughout the United States have waited more than a decade for this hard-fought legislation,” said NIHB Chairperson Cathy Abramson. “This literally is a matter of life or death for American Indians and Alaska Natives. The repeal of this law would have devastating effects on our communities and the lives of our people.”

Chairperson Abramson, along with Board Members Andy Joseph, Lester Secatero, and L. Jace Killsback, stressed the importance of PPACA and IHCA to staff with Rep. Fred Upton (R-MI), the new Chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over health care. The Board Members also sat down with Rep. Mike Simpson (R-ID), who will now Chair the House Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations, to advocate for increased funding to IHS. Chairperson Abramson called the meeting with Chairman Simpson, “Promising.”

Other meetings on these topics included those with Rep. Don Young (R-AK)—Chair of the Natural Resources Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs—and Indian Affairs staff for Sen. Daniel Akaka (D-HI). “Although tribes have enjoyed and benefitted from greater funding in recent years, IHS remains funded at only half the level needed to provide quality health care in Indian Country, said Mr. Secatero, “Committing to the improved health of our communities means providing us with a more generous budget for Indian Health Services.”

In addition to Congressional meetings, NIHB Board Members had the chance to participate in a National press conference in favor the preservation of PPACA organized by Families USA, along with 150 other supportive groups.

NIHB remains committed to the protection and improvement of health care across Indian Country and will continue to fight for these all Tribal governments on Capitol Hill and beyond. Elevating the visibility of Indian health care issues has been a struggle shared by Tribal governments, the federal government and private agencies. The NIHB consistently plays a major role in focusing attention on American Indian and Alaska Native health care needs, resulting in progress for Tribes.

**About NIHB:** The National Indian Health Board is a non-profit organization established by the Tribes in 1972 to advocate on behalf of all Tribal Governments, American Indians

and Alaska Natives, in their efforts to provide quality health care and improve the health status of their People. NIHB is the only organization of its kind: solely dedicated to strengthening health care for all American Indians and Alaska Natives. NIHB is located in Washington, DC.

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