



National Indian
Health Board



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National Indian Organizations Address the President's FY2011 Budget Request at NCAI's Legislative Summit

Proposed increase in health care funding, decrease in Indian housing

WASHINGTON—March 2, 2010—The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) in conjunction with the National Indian Health Board (NIHB) and the National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC) rallied together today in a unified voice to express Indian Country's funding needs in health care, housing and other areas at NCAI's Executive Council Winter Session in Washington, DC.

"Tribes need access to the same resources that other governments have to promote the well-being of Indian people," said NCAI President Jefferson Keel. "In every area of the federal budget, Indian programs receive less per capita than for the rest of the Nation. The budget that the President has proposed for Fiscal Year 2011 will build on some of the investments made in last year's budget process for public safety, contract support costs and health care."

Building on the progress reflected in the President's FY2010 budget, in which he requested a 13 percent increase for Indian health care, the President's FY2011 request includes an 8.7 percent increase for our health care systems.

"The National Indian Health Board applauds the commitment of the President to ensure that the First Americans will not remain last in opportunity for health," said NIHB Board Secretary Cynthia Manuel (Tohono O'odham Nation). "The Budget also demonstrates the Administration's continuing commitment to honor the Federal government's trust responsibilities and treaty obligations. Exempting IHS from the same "freezes" that other agencies experience is a significant sign. It is true that the Indian Health Service remains deeply and chronically underfunded, and falls woefully short of need. However, it is a system that is not broken – it is a system that is starving. The President's actions are nourishment to this system and to our People."

President Keel said that NCAI will work with their partners to advocate for Indian housing programs in FY2011 which the President proposed to drastically cut in his budget request. The President's budget request would decrease funding for the Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) by 17 percent – from the \$700 million enacted by Congress in FY2010 to \$580 million proposed for FY2011.

“If the President's Budget Request of \$580 million were to be enacted by Congress, it would be the lowest ever appropriated for the IHBG account since its creation under NAHASDA. We need to ensure that the Administration's proposed freeze on discretionary funding does not also freeze IHBG dollars for the next three years,” said NAIHC Executive Director Mellor C. Willie. “NAIHC is asking tribes to schedule meetings with Congressional representatives and Agency officials, to write letters to their Members of Congress and to pass resolutions in their tribes supporting the increase in Indian housing funding.”

Willie added that NAIHC and its membership are willing to work with the Obama Administration and the Congressional appropriators to ensure Indian housing accounts receive the funding that tribal communities need and depend on for housing and housing-related community development activities.

Audio of the press conference is available on the NAIHC website – www.naihc.net.

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Founded in 1944, the National Congress of American Indians is the oldest, largest and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization in the country. NCAI advocates on behalf of tribal governments, promoting strong tribal-federal government-to-government policies, and promoting a better understanding among the general public regarding American Indian and Alaska Native governments, people and rights.

The National Indian Health Board advocates on behalf of all Tribal Governments, American Indians, and Alaska Natives in Their Efforts to Provide Quality Health Care

The National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC) was founded in 1974 as a 501(c)(3) corporation. NAIHC is the only national organization representing housing interests of Native people who reside in Indian communities, Alaska Native Villages, and on native Hawaiian Home Lands.