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## **Senate Committee Investigates Allegations of Mismanagement in Aberdeen Area**

The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs has opened a formal investigation of the Indian Health Service (IHS) for gross mismanagement within the Aberdeen Area of IHS. Chairman Dorgan and Vice-Chairman Barasso agreed to authorize the use of subpoenas if necessary, but noted that IHS Director Yvette Roubideaux is fully cooperating with the Committee.

Regarding the investigation, Chairman Dorgan stated that “we [the Committee] have been aware of and attempted to force the IHS to deal with very serious cases of mismanagement, malfeasance, retaliation against whistleblowers as well as potential criminal behavior in the Aberdeen Area. Still, our efforts haven’t resulted in the changes that are necessary. I believe this type of mismanagement in the region over a long period of time has negatively affected health care provided to Native Americans. These problems must be remedied.”

The IHS has been directed to respond and provide documents to the committee by July 28, 2010.

## **Congress Holds Hearings on Diabetes**

Two hearings were held this week on the subject of diabetes. On Wednesday, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs held a hearing titled “A Way Out of the Diabetes Crisis in Indian Country and Beyond.” The hearing explored the growing crisis of diabetes across the nation, particularly in Indian Country, and examined the need for new treatment and research. Witnesses included: Dr. Judith Fradkin, the Director of the Division of Diabetes, Endocrinology and Metabolic Diseases, National Institutes of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, National Institutes of Health; Mr. Wes Studi, Professional Actor and Native American health advocate; Mr. Gary Hall, Olympic swimmer; Dr. Melinda McCabe, President of the Association of American Indian Physicians; and Mr. Caitlin Baker, Muscogee Creek Tribal member and founder of Caitlinb.

Senator Byron Dorgan, Chairman of the Committee said “Diabetes has become a nationwide health care crisis, and the crisis



has struck particularly hard in our Native American communities,” said Chairman of the Indian Affairs Committee Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND).

On Thursday, the Health Subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee held a hearing titled “The Battle Against Diabetes: Progress Made, Challenges Unmet.” The hearing explored progress in research of Type 1, Type 2 and gestational diabetes as well as other public health efforts. NIHB Vice-Chairman Buford Rolin testified before the committee on the crisis of diabetes in Indian Country, and the progress that has been made through the Special Diabetes Program for Indians.

Senator Dorgan in the Senate, and Representative Diana DeGette (CO) in the House, have introduced bills to reauthorize the Special Diabetes program, which includes research for Type 1 diabetes and funds for detection, treatment and prevention of Type 2 diabetes for American Indians and Alaska Natives. For more information on the Special Diabetes Program, visit <http://www.nihb.org/legislative/sdpi.php> for more information.

### **NIHB Participates in Briefing on Childhood Obesity**

On June 30, the National Indian Health Board participated in a briefing hosted by Representative Marcia Fudge (OH) on disparities in childhood obesity among minority populations.

The National Indian Health Board presented information on the impact of childhood obesity in Indian Country, with 31.2 percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives

four year olds are considered overweight or obese. Childhood obesity is a unique issue in Indian Country compared to other communities because of the government-to-government relationship between the United States and Indian tribes, as well as the Federal trust responsibility.

Earlier this year, Representative Fudge was able to pass a resolution recognizing September as Childhood Obesity Awareness Month, which was supported by NIHB. The issue has been recognized as a critical issue, with First Lady Michelle Obama making it her initiative to end childhood obesity within a generation.

The NIHB plans to host an event during the 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Consumer Conference to promote physical activity to prevent and reduce childhood obesity. For more information on the 27<sup>th</sup> ACC and NIHB’s efforts on the issue of childhood obesity, visit [www.nihb.org](http://www.nihb.org).

### **Deadline for Tribal Consultation**

The deadline to submit responses for the Tribal consultation on the implementation of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA) and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Affordable Care Act) passed on July 1, 2010. Many responded to the Indian Health Service and the Department of Health and Human Services letter seeking input of Tribes, Tribal organizations and urban Indian organizations on how to best implement the IHCIA and Affordable Care Act. NIHB submitted its own response, in addition to signing onto a letter submitted by the Tribal Technical Advisory Group and the Medicare and Medicaid Policy Committee.



To view the letters submitted by NIHB and others, visit:

[http://www.nihb.org/tribal\\_resources/tribal\\_resources.php](http://www.nihb.org/tribal_resources/tribal_resources.php).

## **National Tribal Budget Formulation Workgroup Holds Meeting**

The National Tribal Budget Formulation Workgroup met this week to review the Fiscal Year 2012 process and to begin preparations for the Fiscal Year 2013 process.

The workgroup is composed of Tribal representatives of the 12 IHS service areas, representatives of national and other tribal organizations, and is attended by representatives from the Indian Health Service.

Each year, the workgroup submits recommendations as the Federal government prepares its budget request to Congress. This testimony is presented to the Indian Health Service and the Department of Health and Human Services during the National Tribal Consultation and Budget Formulation Meeting each March.

The workgroup reviewed the FY2012 recommendations in light of the passage of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, as well as how to improve the performance measures for the budget.

The workgroup is also developing a letter to submit to the Indian Health Service on the implementation of the IHCIA and Affordable Care Act.

