

## **National Indian Health Board and National Congress of American Indians Propose Candidates for United States Surgeon General**

Washington, DC – Today, the National Indian Health Board (NIHB) was joined by the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) requesting that the administration appoint one of the four candidates it proposed for Surgeon General of the United States. The candidates include foremost leaders in the field of Indian Health: Lori Arviso-Alvord, MD (Navajo), Donald Warne, MD, MPH (Oglala Lakota), Charles Grim, DDS (Cherokee) and Rear Admiral Craig Vanderwagon. The NIHB announced its support for the four candidates at the close of the National Indian Health Board’s National Annual Tribal Public Health Summit June 19, which was held on the Seminole Nation, in Florida.

As stated in the NIHB and NCAI letter: “Serving as Surgeon General of the United States should be an individual with the capacity to speak and act with authority, care and compassion on behalf of the health of all Americans regarding the health of all of our People. The position requires an individual with a long-term vision for a healthy America. The next Surgeon General should be selected from among the finest physicians, medical academicians and health leaders in this Country, including Indian Country. NIHB and NCAI are pleased to support the candidacy of four individuals who possess these critical and unique qualities. In addition to these qualities, all four individuals possess the exceptional intelligence, expertise, personal gifts and national standing that qualifies each of them to provide leadership to all of our nation’s citizens”

A brief biography of each candidate follows:

**Lori Arviso-Alvord, MD**, was the first Navajo woman to become a surgeon. She completed her undergraduate work at Dartmouth College where she graduated Cum Laude in dual Majors of Psychology, Sociology, modified with Native American Studies. She received her medical degree from Stanford University. She is the co-author of the widely acclaimed book, *The Scalpel and the Silver Bear*, which draws from her life experience growing up on the Navajo Reservation, her journey through western medical training and examines the value of combining western medicine with traditional Navajo health practices. Dr. Alvord, a Board Certified Surgeon, received residency training at Stanford University Hospital where she was the Chief Resident, General Surgery. Later, Dr. Alvord served as Dartmouth Medical School’s Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Multicultural Affairs and she is a tenured Professor of Surgery.

**Charles Grim, DDS**, is the immediate past Director of the Indian Health Service (IHS), a position he held from 2002 to 2007. As the IHS Director, Dr. Grim administered a \$4 billion nationwide health care delivery program for approximately 2 million of the nation’s 3.4 million AI/AN people. Dr. Grim also served as the Vice-Chair of the Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary’s Intradepartmental Council on Native Americans Affairs (ICNAA). Through his participation on the ICNAA, Dr. Grim took part in the development



of HHS-wide policy to provide quality services for American Indians and Alaska Natives, the promotion of departmental consultation with Tribal governments, and the development a comprehensive Departmental strategy that promotes Tribal self-sufficiency and self-determination, all of which supported the government-to-government relationship between the Tribes and the federal government.

Dr. Grim received his dental degree from the University of Oklahoma, College of Dentistry and is currently the Senior Director for Health Services for the Cherokee Nation. Dr. Grim is a member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma.

**Donald Warne, MD, MPH**, a member of the Oglala Lakota Tribe, is currently the Director of the Master of Public Health Program at the North Dakota State University School of Public Health, where he created the first American Indian/Alaska Native track in a Master of Public Health program. Dr. Warne's areas of expertise include Public Health Policy, Health Disparities, American Indian Health, and Family Medicine. Dr. Warne has received numerous honors and distinctions including the Mary J. Berg Distinguished Professorship in Women's Health (2012) and the Josiah N. Moore Native American Alumnus of the Year (2008). Dr. Warne received his Doctor of Medicine from Stanford University School of Medicine and his Master of Public Health from Harvard School of Public Health.

**Rear Admiral Craig Vanderwagon, MD**, is a former Assistant Surgeon General of the United States. He received his undergraduate degree from Calvin College and Seminary and his medical degree from the Michigan State University College of Human Medicine. Dr. Vanderwagon has held a number of positions in the public health service of the United States, including serving as the Acting Chief Medical Officer for the Indian Health Service and achieving the position of Assistant Surgeon General. He is currently a Senior Partner at Martin, Blanck, and Associates.