

National Indian Health Board



November 24, 2008
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NIHB APPLAUDS NOMINATION OF DASCHLE FOR SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The National Indian Health Board (NIHB) is pleased that Senator Thomas Daschle will be nominated for Secretary of Health and Human Services. NIHB Chairman H. Sally Smith, applauds President-Elect Obama's nomination of Senator Daschle. As the former Senator from the state of South Dakota, home to nine Indian Tribes, he understands the problems facing Indian Country. "We look forward to working with Senator Daschle to end health disparities and to improve the quality of health care for all American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs)" said Smith.

During his time as Minority and Majority Leader in the Senate he was a fearless champion of Indian Health. He continually offered amendments to increase funding for the Indian Health Service (IHS), fought for Native veteran's health care, and introduced legislation to identify and address health disparities and to improve American Indian and Alaska Native access to Medicaid.

As the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Senator Daschle will be responsible for overseeing the Department of Health and Human Services budget, of over \$700 billion, including the IHS and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' budgets. As Secretary, we are confident that Senator Daschle will ensure passage of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act and continue to support full funding for IHS. He will be in a unique position to advance Tribal issues in other HHS agencies, such as improving AI/AN access to and reimbursements for Medicare, Medicaid and State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) services; and to improve Tribal access to SAMSHA, CDC, and other Department grant programs and funding.

The NIHB encourages Senator Daschle to bring Tribal leaders to the table and include Indian Country in dialogues on health care reform and Medicare and Medicaid reform. We stand ready to support his work to improve the health status of all AI/ANs, which began during his service in Congress and will continue on the national stage as the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

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