



National Indian Health Board



May 2, 2013

Speaker John Boehner
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Majority Leader Harry Reid
U.S. Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner and Majority Leader Reid,

The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) and the National Indian Health Board (NIHB) were disappointed to learn Friday that Congress passed, and the President signed, a measure that would reduce the impact of sequestration on the Federal Aviation Administration without also addressing the life-threatening sequestration cuts to American Indian and Alaska Native health. This measure is sound public policy that will help ensure the safety of millions of Americans, but it is unfortunately targeted at a single agency when sequestration impacts the lives and health of millions of American Indian and Alaska Natives.

For example, Congress has advanced no similar measure aimed at repealing the harmful sequester cuts suffered by 38 urban Indian health programs, and by the 566 Federally Recognized Tribes who receive their health care through the Indian Health Service (IHS), Tribal, and Urban System (I/T/U). Spending cuts from sequestration undermine the legal and statutory obligations to Indian Tribes and American Indian and Alaska Native citizens that are funded in the federal budget. These cuts also adversely impact Tribes' ability to promote economic growth and jeopardize needed improvements to the Indian health care system.

The trust responsibility to provide health care services to American Indians and Alaska Natives is a solemn obligation of the United States, paid for in advance by tribes through the cession of millions of acres of native land. While NCUIH and NIHB appreciate that you share our deep concern for the sustainability of IHS, Tribal and Urban health programs in this period of fiscal austerity, we are dismayed by the lack of an apparent strategy on the part of the Congress to permanently end these ill-conceived cuts to Indian health.


Please act on behalf of American Indian and Alaska Native health NOW. The NCUIH and the Tribes believe it is time that Congress acts to exempt health services for American Indians and Alaska Natives from the effects of the sequester and to restore the \$240 million lost by IHS to rescissions and sequestration since FY 2011. Having acceded to demands to restore funding for air traffic controllers, the Congress must consider measures already proposed that reduce the impact of the sequester on Indian health programs. Exempting the Indian Health Service from sequester will save lives and help to fulfill the trust obligation of the United States towards American Indians and Alaska Natives. Please stop this practice of the First People of this land remaining last in opportunity.

We are available and stand ready to assist you in these efforts and we thank you for your serious consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Moke Eaglefeathers, President
National Council of Urban Indian Health



Cathy Abramson, Chairperson
National Indian Health Board

Cc:

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell

Dr. Yvette Roubideaux, Director, Indian Health Service

Jodi Gillette, The White House, Senior Policy Advisor, Native American Affairs