



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #MSP-15-012

TITLE: Support Expansion of Employment Services to American Indians/Alaska Natives with Disabilities

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WHEREAS, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

WHEREAS, there are nearly 1 million American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) who live with disabilities and nearly 600,000 of this population are of working age and that represents the highest rate of disability among any other demographic group; and

WHEREAS, the NCAI recognizes that AI/ANs with disabilities were not being well served by the states' Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services and that this is mainly due to the lack of culturally-centered services, because much like with the Veteran population, tribal people find it difficult to seek services in the traditional VR setting; and

WHEREAS, tribal governments asserted their sovereignty and called for the establishment of tribal vocational rehabilitation programs called American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS) funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) work by using culturally-centered services to assist AI/ANs with disabilities find and obtain meaningful employment and consistently have a nearly 60% placement rate; and

WHEREAS, while progress has been made to increase the number of AIVRS programs serving Indian Country, there remains a significant gap in available programs versus the number of AI/ANs with disabilities needing culturally-centered services and of the 600,000 working age AI/ANs with a disability, AIVRS programs are currently serving less than 10,000; and

WHEREAS, this vulnerable part of our people are literally in crises and are crying out for the hope and the dignity of being able to care for themselves and their families by attaining meaningful employment and loss of hope for those with disabilities who cannot find employment contributes to the alarming suicide rates in Indian Country, finding ways to instill hope in them is paramount.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the NCAI supports that the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services programs continue providing culturally-centered services to their people and increase the number served and that the programs have demonstrated that culture and language are the keys in providing quality services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NCAI urges Congress and federal agencies to support direct permanent funding for AIVRS programs in addition to legislation and federal policies that increases the tribal set-aside for AIVRS programs to 5%; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NCAI supports legislation and federal policies that establish Tribally-Controlled Satellite Services to meet the needs of Indian Country; and

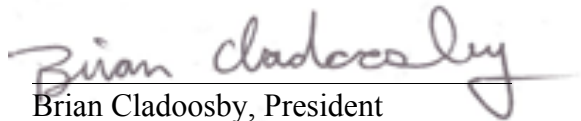
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NCAI urges Congress and federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Education, to ensure that programs serving AI/ANs with a disability are administered and operated by tribally-controlled organizations that provide services in a culturally-centered manner, so as to improve the opportunities and resources for those living with disabilities, and that they may freely strive to realize their full potential; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NCAI recognizes and supports the mission of the Consortia of Administrators of Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) to empower American Indians and Alaskan natives with disabilities through education and advocacy, and their work in bringing technical assistance training and capacity building to AIVRS programs; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2015 Midyear Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the St. Paul River Centre, St. Paul, MN, June 28 to July 1, 2015, with a quorum present.


Brian Cladoosby, President

ATTEST:


Aaron Payment, Recording Secretary