



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #PDX-11-011

TITLE: Support for Full Funding for Indian Programs in Actions Reducing the Federal Deficit through the Joint Deficit Committee

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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, under the United States Constitution, the United States government has a Nation-to-Nation relationship, as set forth in the Commerce clause contained in Article I, Section 8, Clause 3, which states that the United States Congress has the power to “*regulate “commerce with foreign nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian tribes”*” and under the Treaty clause, Article 6, Clause 2, which makes treaties the Supreme Law of the land; and

WHEREAS, arising out of this Nation-to-Nation relationship, along with the taking of Indian lands from Tribes over the past 300 years, the many Treaties that the United States has with Indian Tribes, numerous Federal statutes, and many decisions of the United States Supreme Court, the U.S. has a unique and fundamental trust responsibility towards American Indians, Alaska Natives and the Indian Tribes that remain and that are federally recognized within the boundaries of the United States, and for whom reservations were established or lands were set aside subject to use by the various Indian tribes and Alaska Natives, on which more than one million Tribal citizens reside; and

WHEREAS, under the various Treaties entered into by the U.S. with Indian Tribes, and pursuant to statute and Supreme Court decisions, the U.S. has a trust responsibility to provide a number of services to American Indian and Alaska Native citizens; and

WHEREAS, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), part of the Department of Interior, is the government agency charged with carrying out the long-standing trust responsibility of the U.S. towards those peoples and Tribal Nations that first occupied the lands that became the United States; and

WHEREAS, Congress has now enacted deficit reduction legislation that has raised the ceiling on the national debt, a ceiling that will probably not be approached until after the 2012 elections; and

WHEREAS, a part of the legislation is the creation by Congress of a bi-partisan Joint Deficit Committee composed of 12 Congressmen and women, six (6) Representatives and six (6) Senators, that must work to reduce the national debt or risk automatic spending cuts imposed by the legislation signed into law on August 2, 2011; and

WHEREAS, proposals are under consideration by the Joint Deficit Committee, including one very detailed proposal by Senator Coburn of Oklahoma, that would eliminate or drastically reduced many programs that benefit American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Indian Tribes; and

WHEREAS, the superficial review of programs, such as a proposal that would eliminate funding for Tribal Colleges, who serve more than 30,000 students at 35 Tribal colleges in the United States, fails to understand or even acknowledge the unique trust responsibility that the United States has for its American Indian and Alaska Native citizens, and calls many of the programs that assist American Indians and Alaska Natives duplicative or wasteful without understanding at all the hardships and continued displacement suffered by American Indians and Alaska Natives from their homelands over the past 500 years; and

WHEREAS, any cuts to programs benefitting American Indians, regardless of which U.S. agency or department provides such programs, that results from short and long-term reductions in expenditures made as a result of legislation increasing the debt ceiling of the United States would seriously erode the trust responsibility the U.S. has to American Indians, Alaska Natives and Indian Tribes, and are not acceptable, particularly given the fact that over the past 100 years, American Indians and Alaska Natives have volunteered for the U.S. military at a proportional rate far greater than any other ethnic group in the U.S.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the NCAI does hereby support full funding for all U.S. programs in existence that provide a benefit to American Indians, Alaska Natives and Indian Tribes, regardless of the Department within the Executive Branch that carries out the particular trust responsibility; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI hereby urges that in any actions proposed by the Joint Deficit Committee and approved by Congress, the trust responsibility of the U.S. to its citizens who are Indians and Alaska Natives and to the federally recognized Indian tribes within the United States should not be reduced in any manner; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI urges the Joint Deficit Committee to declare that cuts to federal Indian programs will not be a part of any reductions in expenditures that may be part of its recommendations to Congress to reduce the deficit of the United States and to explicitly reject the draconian and ruinous budget cuts to Indian programs that have been proposed by Senator Coburn of Oklahoma; and

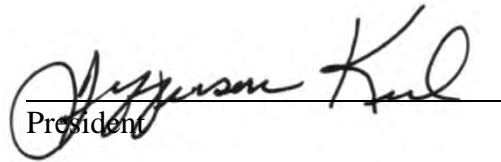
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI hereby requests all federally recognized Indian Tribes to pass similar resolutions opposing any cuts to funding for federal Indian programs in the recommendations of the Joint Deficit Committee; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI hereby reiterates its request that the trust responsibility of the United States to American Indians and Alaska Natives be fulfilled in the FY 2012, FY 2013 and future federal budgets; 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 2011 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland, Oregon on October 30 – November 4, 2011, with a quorum present.



President

ATTEST:



Recording Secretary