



# 2016 Executive Council Winter Session

National Congress of American Indians | Capital Hilton | Washington, D.C.  
February 22, 2016 - February 24, 2016

**“NCAI improves our world one person, one community at a time. That’s why when you speak, we listen. That’s because when you speak for the community, the word unity is in it. The oath we take every day—liberty and justice for all.”**

**– Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), U.S. House of Representatives**

Unity—this single word became the theme for the week to the nearly 500 speakers and attendees at the 2016 Executive Council Winter Session at the Capital Hilton in Washington, DC. From the general sessions to the conversations in the halls, people spoke in the spirit of a united front for the Native community.

On Monday, February 24, 2016, the 2016 Executive Council Winter Session kicked off the week with sessions on subjects such as Native Vote, Violence Against Women Act, Federal Acknowledgment, Transportation, Contract Support Cost, Tribal Tax Parity, and Native Student Education.

The 1st General Session began in the afternoon with the President’s Address by NCAI President Brian Cladoosby and an Executive Director’s Report by NCAI Executive Director Jackie Pata. Both President Cladoosby and Pata stressed the importance of the current political climate to passing key legislation for Indian Country in the few remaining days of the 114th Congress.

“There are only 90 working days left this year in Congress. The priority will be to pass each of the 12 appropriations bills in order—if they do, it will be the first time they pass a budget before the fiscal year ends in 12 years,” said President Cladoosby.

“Last year, only 3% of the bills introduced were passed. We should not despair, however, as we will not need any floor time,” said Pata. “We are in the fourth quarter and we just have to get over the finish line. We did a heavy lift on the work last year, so we are in the closing game.”

Pata went on to highlight land into trust legislation and Carcieri fix legislation, in which she urged tribes to reach out to Senator Tester and Senator Barrasso commenting, “[both Senators] want to hear from tribes.” She also went on to discuss the Tribal Labor Sovereignty Act (H.R. 511 & S. 248), Indian Trust Asset Reform (H.R. 812 & S. 383), and the five-month stall on the reauthorization of Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act of 1996 (NAHASDA).

Karen Diver, President Obama’s Special Assistant for Native American Affairs shared a new housing pilot program between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development called HUD-VASH. Diver highlighted the significance of continuing the program and encouraged tribal leaders to advocate for its full integration into Veterans Affairs services.

Acting Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education John King took the floor following Diver, and reflected on his own education experience growing up homeless in Brooklyn, New York, stating how an investment in education can positively change students’ lives.

“We now have the highest graduation rate that we’ve ever had as a country. Yet, we worry that

## Key Themes Developed:

### Unity & Community Collaboration

As each speaker took the mic this week a continual theme of unity began to show through. Whether it was tribal leaders, the Administration, or our friends from Congress the focus on collaboration for Indian Country was infectious. Speakers explained collaboration on many fronts including tribal-to-tribal collaboration, Democrat to Republican bi-partisanship, tribal-to-Administration Consultation, unified fronts are crucial to the future of Indian Country.

### The Power of the Native Vote

Several members of Congress stressed the importance of Native Vote and voter protection. Coupled by the efforts of NCAI Native Vote sessions, the strengthening of the Native voice is a must in the fight for electing Native advocates into office. To learn more about Native Vote and how to become a Native Vote Coordinator contact Jalene Herron at [jherron@ncai.org](mailto:jherron@ncai.org).

### Advocate & Educate

Speakers from the Administration, Congress, and other Organizations alike encouraged all tribal leaders to make their voices heard, to help educate policymakers to make the best decisions for Indian Country.

Thank you to all of our wonderful attendees, speakers, volunteers, and sponsors for making this 2016 ECWS one of our best yet!

Please visit the link below for the updated post-session agenda.

Download Updated Agenda Here:  
<http://goo.gl/xQYd5n>



the progress is not fast enough for Native youth.” said King. “We can’t afford to throw away any of our young people.”

EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy lit up the stage with her energy as she spoke about the “leaps forward” the EPA has made since the 1984 Indian Policy. She announced a new climate change app created by Local Environmental Observer (LEO) Network, which has grown from an Alaska-based network into a nation-wide network of hundreds of participants who are helping us enhance community resilience—reporting changes at the local level, using traditional knowledge. The LEO app can be downloaded on both iOS and Android, check out the link here: <https://goo.gl/LD5WpG>.

Senator Al Franken (D-MN) credited Karen Diver for his introduction to the concept of tribal sovereignty—and how much better tribes do when they are empowered to exercise self-governance. He said “I was elected by 312 votes, I’m sure it was you guys...” bringing full circle the importance of the Native Vote!

Senator Franken went onto say, “We’re not going to solve our funding problems this year, but we have to make progress. My job is to make my colleagues aware of the need. My job is to continue fighting alongside of you to create a better Indian Country.”

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Acting Deputy Secretary Mary Wakefield spoke about the rise in funding for Indian Health Service under the Obama Administration over the past eight years, the continued work and focus on contract support costs, and the establishment of the Tribal Advisory Council.

“I don’t care if you’re Republican or Democrat, we have to stand up for the rights of Indian Country,” said Senator Steve Daines (R-MT).

Senator Daines also discussed his work on the amendments to the Affordable Care Act with the introduction of a bill to relieve tribes of the burdensome employer mandate.

U.S. Department of the Interior Acting Assistant Secretary Larry Roberts spoke on a number of issues from adult education to the continued work on the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), and stressed tribes to submit their fee-to-trust applications.

“Scholarships and adult education is important. We need better data to increase funding through Office of Management and Budget and others. We need to improve data support and more funding for our Native One-Stop shop,” said Roberts.

On Tuesday, February 23, 2016, U.S. Small Business Administration Administrator, Maria Contreras-Sweet advocated for the improved SBA loan program.

“We continue to spur innovation—our loans to Native communities are up by 31%,” said Contreras-Sweet. “When you get a contract, we make sure that you get paid in 14 days—whether corporate/private sector or government sectors.”

Congressman Dan Kildee (D-MI) said that he was proud to stand in support of the Tribal Labor Sovereignty Act (TLSA), but has serious concerns about the privatization of housing developments under NAHASDA that would give up Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) protections and ultimately would go to a for-profit entity.

“If we get full reauthorization with that element, I want to offer caution—a deal that looks good on paper, doesn’t always look so good when it’s executed,” said Congressman Kildee.

Senator James Lankford (R-OK) expanded on the need for collaboration and unity stating that we need to spend more time investing in our strength as neighbor-to-neighbor.

“Tribal sovereignty should be unchallenged—where you don’t have the authority to make decisions, you need to let us know,” said Lankford. “I don’t come with a piece of policy, I come with an idea: Let’s find a way to fix this for the future of our children—and let’s celebrate what we’re doing well.”



John King, Acting Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education



EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy



Senator Al Franken (D-MN)



U.S. Small Business Administration Administrator, Maria Contreras-Sweet



HHS Acting Deputy Secretary Mary Wakefield



Deputy Director of Indian Health Service, Mary Smith, echoed the remarks given by President Cladoosby and Executive Director Jackie Pata, comparing the timing of her position to the game of football and offered her three-principled approach to the next few months of the Obama Administration. But Smith urged with tribal leaders that she can't do all of the work on her own, and needs help from Indian Country to complete the work.

“Games are not won in the first quarter, but in the fourth quarter by the team that wants to win the most. I want to win the most—and I came in, in the fourth quarter,” said Smith. “[I have three principals]: (1) [IHS] exists to serve Native people; (2) I will be your champion and fight for access to health care around the clock; (3) We are going to work as much as possible in this last window.”

Senator Jon Tester (D-MT) reported to the NCAI attendees about the passage of the Tribal Self-Governance Act and Indian Education Bill in the Senate, and is looking forward to the passage of both bills in the House. Other legislation he supports includes a clean Carcieri fix and the Native Educator Support and Training Act (NEST Act), which aims to retain Native teachers and establishes a pipeline for culturally trained teachers, thus providing students with the 21st century education necessary to succeed.

Representatives from National Indian Women's Resource Center gave an update on VAWA stressing that the bill is under attack in the Supreme Court and the need of continual support by tribal leaders and policy makers.

The reoccurring theme of unity further developed during the 3rd General Session with remarks by Congressman Don Young (R-AK).

“This [NCAI] is a good organization,” said Young. “If I could give you one recommendation: Be united...politically and economically. Your strength is in your unity.”

Although a freshman in Congress this term, Congresswoman Norma Torres (D-CA) is a fierce warrior for Indian Country on the Hill. In just this term alone, she has fought for a clean Carcieri fix, co-sponsoring bills for land-into-trust and the Tribal Coastal Resiliency Act. Torres also advocated for Native Vote, and adamantly expressed the need for all members of Congress to stand up for Indian Country.

“It is not just for members who live near tribes to stand up for the rights of Indian Country,” said Torres. “The fights we're fighting might not be new, but they give us an opportunity to make progress and prevent regression. The Native vote plays a bigger and bigger role in the West. It's time to ask those running for office if they stand with Indian Country.”

Frank Ettawageshik provided the Climate Change Update from reporting back from his experience at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris, France in late 2015.

“There were 200 indigenous reps among 45,000 in Paris,” said Ettawageshik. “[It was the] first time that the rights of indigenous peoples and traditional knowledge were recognized.”

Director of Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs at the U.S. Department of Energy, Chris Deschene, reported on the five goals in the strategic plan for modernizing the Office of Indian Energy including:

- 1) People, Communications, Operational Structure
- 2) Partnerships, Relationships, Communications, Reputation
- 3) Institutionalize the Office of Indian Energy
- 4) Advance Indian Energy Policy; and
- 5) Maximize Service in Indian Country.

Congressman Frank Pallone (D-NJ) gave remarks highlighting the work around health care for Indian Country and his continued work on allowing tax credits for not only health services, but for renewable energy sources as well, and the need for the expansion of telecommunications through broadband infrastructure.



Senator Steve Daines (R-MT)



U.S. Department of Interior Acting Assistant Secretary Larry Roberts



Senator Jon Tester (D-MT)



National Indian Women's Resource Center



Congressman Don Young (R-AK)



As the next speaker took the stage, the room was filled with anticipation, and Congresswoman Betty McCollum (D-MN) did not disappoint.

“President Obama made a historic commitment to foster the nation-to-nation relationship. We need to call on the next President to continue that tradition,” said McCollum. Highlighting bipartisan initiatives such as GWE, IHCIA, TLOA, and VAWA provisions she spoke passionately about the collaboration efforts and unity in Congress that made positive change happen. In her remarks she also mentioned about the protection of natural resources and fisheries on tribal lands, and the importance of education for Native youth.

“Every day, Native children go to learn in unsafe and substandard schools and that is unacceptable,” said McCollum. “Congress needs to spend whatever it takes to fix these schools.”

Congresswoman McCollum was awarded the Congressional Leadership Award later that evening during the 18th Annual Leadership Awards Ceremony.

On Wednesday, February 24, 2016, Senator John Barrasso (R-WY) spoke on behalf of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs as well as his office, as he underlined the work of the Indian Tribal Energy Act, Indian Self-Determination Act, Roads Safety & Enhancement Act, and the introduction of the Reforming American Indian Standards (RISE Act) to modernize the Bureau of Indian Education by creating a bureau under the Department of the Interior. He also spoke on the Committees’ work on the SURVIVE Act, an Indian victim empowerment bill, which provides tribes with full funding for culturally appropriate support for victims.

Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) advanced the theme of unity and collaboration in her remarks stating, “whether Republicans or Democrats are in power, we are resolute in advancing the rights of Indian peoples in a nonpartisan way.”

Murkowski turned the attention to Alaska Lt. Governor Byron Mallott, with heartfelt and admirable words.

“Lt. Governor Byron Mallott—as a father, committed statesman, advocate for Indian peoples. So many of the issues you face here at the NCAI must be nonpartisan—Byron Mallott is an example of that—he says the party label doesn’t matter. This is the right thing to do. He came in on a unity ticket—there was consensus and support for the right reasons, not a partisan reason,” said Murkowski.

Representative Mike Honda (D-CA) relayed his passion to his work with Indian Country saying, “I want you to push me, educate me...if they’re important to you, then they’re important to me. You’re my kinship, you’re my guideposts.”

Honda went on to discuss the challenges faced by Indian Country in education and the justice system. “I will advocate for a 7% set-aside for all tribal criminal justice programs—from prevention, to enforcement, to detention, to rehabilitation. If that isn’t sufficient, we need to push for more,” said Honda.

Regarding culturally appropriate education, Honda remarked, “education for each and every child has always been a top legislative priority—education is a fundamental right for all Americans. Language and culture are intrinsically interconnected. Losing our language is losing a part of who we are. Language is the transmission of culture and history.”

**“We are all here together to form a more perfect union.”**

**-Representative Mike Honda (D-CA)**

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert McDonald expanded on the HUD-VASH program introduced by Karen Diver earlier in the week.

“Housing of veterans and their families—HUD-VASH Program—is collaborative. It provides eligible homeless veterans a voucher for supportive services for physical and mental health problems, substance abuse, etc,” said Secretary McDonald. “For 2016, we have allocated \$5.9



Congresswoman Norma Torres (D-CA)



Frank Ettawageshik, Executive Director,  
United Tribes of Michigan



Chris Deschene, Director of Office of Indian  
Energy Policy and Programs



Congresswoman Betty McCollum (D-MN)



Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)



million for the implementation of HUD-VASH...and \$1.6 billion for homeless veterans' programs."

Senator Michael Crapo (R-ID) spoke primarily on the Indian Trust Asset Reform Act (SB 383) and has high hopes for the bill to pass this session.

"The Trust Asset Reform Act is truly a tribal bill—it was drafted primarily by ATNI. If we want to truly support Indian self-determination, we need consultation with the tribes before proposing a policy that affects them," said Crapo. "The bill will increase tribal control of assets and will promote economic development. We are looking to fund a demonstration project. The bill will delegate more authority to the tribes while maintaining agreeable oversight by the federal government."

Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives (D-CA), spoke on a multitude of issues, and placed a high value on the unity of not only tribal leaders but the collaboration of tribes and Native organizations working with members of Congress to create change.

"NCAI improves our world one person, one community at a time. That's why when you speak, we listen. That's because when you speak for the community, the word unity is in it," said Pelosi.

Leader Pelosi also placed special interest in Native Youth and acknowledged the youth in the assembly, specifically celebrating youth leader and Champion of Change Dakota Brown. Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-WI) gave spirited remarks to the general assembly and underscored the need for reauthorization of NAHASDA.

"We don't want tribal housing on the chopping block. You have been walking that thin line—being bipartisan—but I know from my work with you that you guys know how to throw a punch," said Moore. "Tell [Congress] to get off their duffs and pass the bill."

Fellow Wisconsin statesman Congressman Mark Pocan (D-WI) followed up Congresswoman Moore, providing his view on his work to repeal the sequester and advocating for a clean Carcieri fix. However, he stated, "the main reason I'm here today is to talk about a bipartisan bill that the federal government cannot consider marijuana production in the distribution of self-determination funds. [I] don't want Indians to be evicted from public housing for minor marijuana possession."

Jodi Archambault-Gillette and Mary Pavel of Sonosky, Chambers, Sachse, Endreson & Perry, LLP gave an update on the final order in the Ramah Navajo case—the \$940 million settlement that was negotiated between the plaintiffs and the U.S. In 60 days, the Department of Justice will be recouping funds from the Treasury and distributing them.



Representative Mike Honda (D-CA)



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert McDonald



Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)



Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-WI)



Congressman Mark Pocan (D-WI)



# 18th Annual Leadership Awards Ceremony

February 23, 2016



NCAI Board Members with this years nine outstanding honorees.



U.S. Representative Betty McCollum,  
Congressional Leadership Award

Kevin Washburn,  
Government Leadership Award

Lt. Governor Byron Mallott,  
Native American Leadership Award



Mike Wise,  
Public Sector Leadership Award

Sherry Salway Black,  
Special Recognition Leadership Award

Jesse Witten,  
Special Recognition Leadership Award



The 2015-2016 Tribal Exchange Winners were given their awards by a surprise special guest, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye.

Sherry Salway Black in her acceptance of the award announced she was submitting a \$500 check in an effort to start a NCAI Youth Membership Fund, which was matched by the First Nations Development Institute. Before the night was over Sault Ste. Marie Tribe and Swinomish Tribe both also accepted the challenge to match the funds.



# Executive Committee Officer Swear In at ECWS 2016

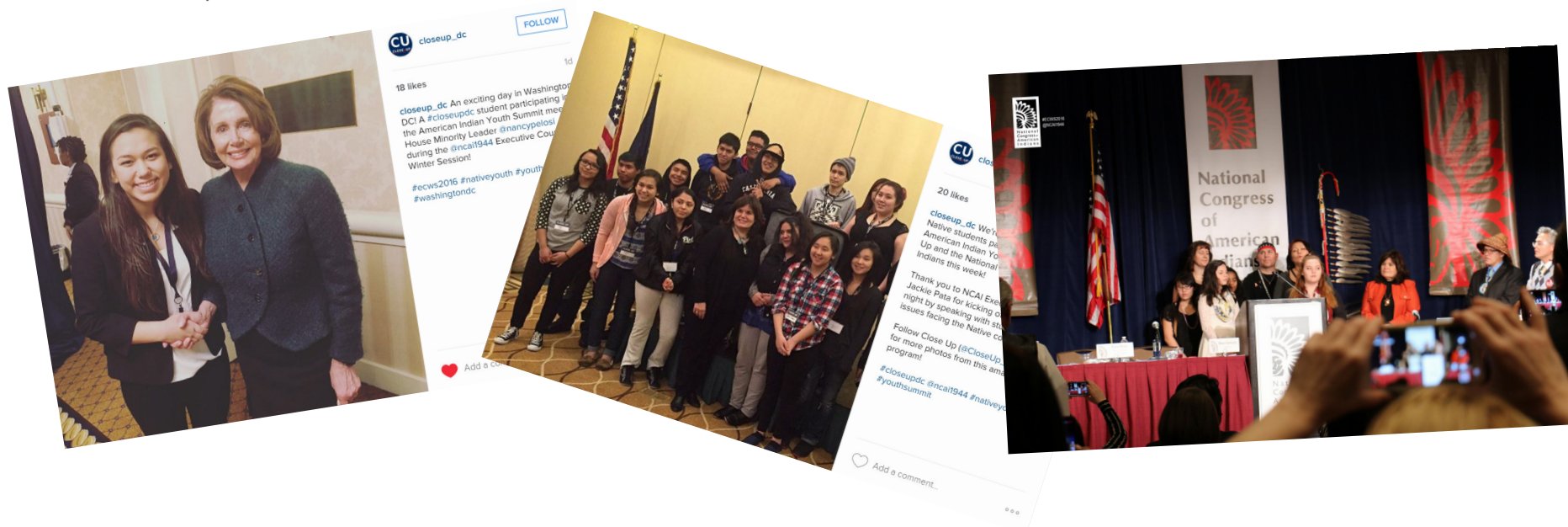
Congratulations to the Executive Committee Officers and the appointment of First Vice President, Fawn Sharp! Juanita Ahtone, NCAI Elections Committee Chair conducted the swearing in of the NCAI Board Members not sworn in at the Annual Convention.

Midwest Area VP, Roger Rader (Pokagon Band of Potawatomi)  
 Eastern Oklahoma Alternate Area VP, Norman Hildebrand (Wyandotte Nation)  
 Northeast Alternate Area VP, Fatima Dames (Mashantucket Pequot Tribe)  
 Great Plains Area VP, Dr. Leander McDonald (UTTC; Spirit Lake Nation)  
 First Vice President, Fawn Sharp (Quinault Indian Nation)



## Native Youth Recognition

NCAI was excited to host a number of Native Youth groups throughout the week including: the NCAI Youth Commission, who are celebrating their 20th year as a permanent body of NCAI; the National Native Youth Cabinet who have shown leadership for all Native youth; Close Up Foundation High School students, who are exercising their rights and responsibilities as citizens in a democracy; Tribal Exchange Stock Market Game Fall 2015 1st Place Winners; the National Coalition of Native American College Placement Services Students; and the Pueblo of Santa Clara Native youth.



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See you at our  
 Mid Year Conference!  
 Spokane, WA  
 June 27-30, 2016

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