

Dealing with dilemmas in Washington, D.C.



**CATHY ABRAMSON, DIRECTOR,
UNIT I**

It was great to see such a great turnout of our tribal members and their families at our first ever gathering in Maryland/D.C. Chi megwetch Stacy Bohlen for hosting this fine event! It was good to find out that we have members who work for the Environmental Protection Agency, National

Institutes of Health and Indian Country Today newspaper. I look forward to meeting you all again on a regular basis!

With everything that is happening in D.C., ALL our federal funding is obviously being affected which in turn affects the direct services you receive whether it be in health, USDA, housing, and social services to name a few.

Division and program directors were asked to plan their budgets at 2 percent, 5 percent, 10 percent and 14 percent decreases. I want to take this time to thank our staff for all the many extra hours they are putting in to plan their budgets per the direction of the chairperson and the board. As I write this report, our division and program directors and top administrators are working toward reducing budgets, which in turn will reduce services or eliminate services. The tribal board of directors will then vote to approve the budget plan.

Because I have been work-

ing at a national level in the area of health, I will give you a brief update of what is and what could

happen during this tumultuous time. In 2013, Indian Health Service received a \$220 mil-

lion cut, which devastated tribes across Indian Country. Many are
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furloughing employees, reducing service hours and even canceling some programs altogether. IHS is funded at on only 56 percent of total need, so any small cut makes the biggest difference for all tribes.

For FY 2014, Congress must pass a budget within a budget cap of \$967 billion if automatic sequestration cuts are to be avoided. Right now, the House and Senate budgets are \$91 billion apart, so compromise is a long way off. Currently, Congress has failed to pass a continuing resolution to keep the government operating and the federal government is shutdown. As early as the week of Oct. 7,

the House may consider a bill to fund the IHS, BIA and the BIE. This is unlikely to be taken up by the Senate and President Obama has threatened to veto it.

We have worked extremely hard in D.C. by testifying before the House Appropriations Committee and the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs in April. We continue to do so.

Because the Budget Control Act has a different mechanism for issuing sequestration orders for FY 2014, it is likely that IHS will be held to a 2 percent sequestration limit. BUT, the Office of Management and Budget will be the final arbiter. With all this being said, this

obviously affects the health funding of our tribe, which in turn will affect our services.

I wish that I could reassure you that everything will be okay, but I can't. No one knows what is going to happen at this time. Hopefully, by the time you get this, the government will be re-opened, our tribe will receive our funding appropriations and we will move forward. We just don't know. Take care and keep our tribe in your prayers.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at cabramson@saultribe.net or (906) 322-3823. As always, I look forward to hearing from you!