

H.R. 1505 is a direct threat to tribal sovereignty



**CATHY ABRAMSON, DIRECTOR,
UNIT I**

The icy cold winter is knocking on our door! Enjoy what's left of our beautiful but short fall days! Our Annual Veterans' Pow Wow will once again be held at the Kinross Community Center on Saturday, Nov. 12, 2011. I hope to see you all there! Come out to honor our men, women and their families who have given their lives to keep our country free! They have sacrificed so much and continue to do so. Happy Thanksgiving to you and your families and don't forget to say an extra special thank you to our warriors and their families.

Speaking of our veterans, I had the opportunity to spend time and attend an Indian Health Service and Department of Veterans Affairs Conference with our very own Mary Beth Skupien, Director of the VHA Office of Rural Health and Ms. Stephanie Birdwell, VA Office of Tribal Government Relations.

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the partnership between Indian Health Services and the Department of Veterans Affairs, efforts accomplished in Michigan, and opportunities for the future. Also discussed were how VA could reach out to tribal governments and increasing access to VA resources for Veterans in Indian Country.

Included in the presentation were top staff from IHS and VA Directors from Saginaw and Iron Mountain. Also included were rural health coordinators and consultants. We discussed VA programs, sites-tertiary sites, medical centers, CBOC's, points of contact, eligibility, referral process care coordination/care choice and outreach.

John Drumsta of the Veterans Benefits Administration discussed VA benefits and individuals signed up for workgroups to discuss how to better serve our people.

We have awesome opportunities to partner with the Veteran's Administration in an effort to provide better outreach services to our tribal veterans. This is a service that we just don't have right now. I will keep you informed of progress being made as I plan to stay closely involved with this development. What I am very interested in is obtaining funding for a VA tribal coordinator position.

We have already made plans to hold next year's meeting in Sault Ste. Marie and will be inviting all Michigan leaders and health directors to attend. The purpose of this

meeting will be a follow up to this meeting to make sure that progress is made for our veterans. We are very fortunate to have Mary Beth and Stephanie, two strong Native women, at such high levels in the Veterans Administration. They are looking out for us and will make sure that the VA staff does their very best to improve access to our tribal veterans.

United Tribes Meeting

While attending the United Tribes meeting this past Tuesday (Oct. 25), Executive Director Frank Ettawegishik brought forward an emergency draft resolution titled, "Oppose the National Security and Federal Lands Protection Act, H.R. 1505."

It reads as follows:

WHEREAS, the National Security and Federal Lands Protection Act (H.R. 1505) prohibits the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture from impeding, prohibiting or restricting the activities of the Secretary of Homeland Security on lands under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture that are within 100 miles of the international land and maritime borders of the United States; and

WHEREAS, H.R. 1505 authorizes the Secretary of Homeland Security to have immediate access to public land management by the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture within 100 miles of the international land and maritime borders of the United States for purposes of conducting activities that assist in

securing the border;

WHEREAS, H.R. 1505 enables the Secretary of Homeland Security to immediate access to these lands for the purpose of maintaining and constructing roads, fences, and infrastructure, and using vehicles to patrol, and setting up monitoring equipment; and

WHEREAS, H.R. 1505 waives the application of thirty six (36) environmental laws on these lands managed by the Interior and Agriculture departments, including National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Solid Waste Disposal Act, the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, the Coastal Zone Management Act and the Administrative Procedure Act; and

WHEREAS, H.R. 1505 use the terms "federal lands," "public lands" and "land under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture," alternatively and without reference to specific definitions;

WHEREAS, H.R. 1505 may apply to tribal lands within the 1,000 mile zone around the international and maritime borders of the United States; and

WHEREAS, if passed H.R. 1505 may enable the Secretary of Homeland Security to have immediate access to these tribal lands and engage in the aforementioned activities without the consent of

tribal governments and without having to comply with 36 federal or tribal environmental laws; and

WHEREAS, H.R. 1505 is a direct and profound threat to tribal sovereignty, including the territorial and jurisdictional integrity of tribal lands and the protection of tribal environments, natural resources, sacred places cultural activities, subsistence practices and tribal lifeways; and

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

The resolution was unanimously approved by the leadership at United Tribes. I fully support this very serious issue! Because this directly affects our tribe, we were asked to sponsor this resolution at the up and coming National Congress of American Indians Conference to be held in Portland, Ore. As our delegate, Director Causley will co-sponsor this along with Chairman Finley of the Colville Business Council. I'm sure they will do well and NCAI leadership will pass this resolution.

Register to Vote!

Our elections will soon be upon us and it is always important that you register to vote. You may register any time now and if you haven't, please do so.

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

Write your representatives about your matters of concern, like HR 1505:

U.S. President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
(202) 456-1111
TTY/TDD: (202) 456-6213

United States Senate
Senator Carl Levin
269 Russell Office Building
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510-2202
(202) 224-6221
TTY (202) 224-2816

Senator Debbie Stabenow
133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-4822

U.S. House of Representatives
Congressman Dan Benishek
514 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-4735

Governor Rick Snyder
P.O. Box 30013,
Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 373-3400

Governor Snyder’s
Northern Michigan Office
1504 West Washington, Suite B,
Marquette, MI 49855
(906) 228-2850

Michigan Senate
Dist. 37 State Sen. Howard Walker

P.O. Box 30036,
Lansing, MI 48909-7536
(517) 373-2413

Dist. 38 State Sen. Tom Casperson
P.O. Box 30036,
Lansing, MI 48909-7536
(517) 373-7840

State House of Representatives
Dist. 107 Rep. Frank Foster
S-1486 House Office Building
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 373-2629

Dist. 108 Rep. Edward McBroom
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48933

(517) 373-0156
Dist. 109 Rep. Steven Lindberg
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514
(517) 373-0498

How to Write an Effective Letter

Elected officials take letters from their constituents very seriously. This is especially true when individuals have taken the time to sit down and write a letter in their own words. Elected officials pay the most attention to letters from voters in their own districts. To make your letters the most effective:

1. Write a letter you would like

to receive. Use a factual, professional tone, don’t exaggerate and avoid name-calling or making threats.

2. Write legibly. Only use a typewriter or computer when your handwriting is difficult to read. Include your name and address.

3. Limit your letter to one page and stick to a single topic. First, state that you support or oppose a position or piece of legislation. Refer to bills and resolutions by number if possible.

4. Then, list the reasons for your support or opposition. Last, ask your representatives to write back explaining their position on the legislation.