

PROUDLY REPRESENTING YOU AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS



Aaron A. Payment, MPA
Tribal Chairperson
Representing All Members
Everywhere

Ahneen, Booze, Negee:

I am pleased to report that I was once again asked to testify in the U.S. Senate on Indian Country priorities. My testimony appears to the right.

Below are two **Call to Action** items I am asking you to please assist us in advocating for our Tribe. One issue deals with draft federal legislation to circumvent the right of Michigan citizens who spoke loudly last fall via referendum to halt the wanton and unjustified killing of Gray Wolves in Michigan. The other deals with a huge opportunity with full and mandatory funding for IHS Contract Support Costs.

SUPPORT MANDATORY IHS CSC FUNDING

Recently, President Obama took a historic leap in recognizing and honoring the trust responsibility to American Indian tribes pursuant to treaties and the U.S. Constitution. The President took action no previous President has by proposing to move a portion of federal funding for tribes from "discretionary" to "mandatory/non-discretionary". If passed, this would mean that the devastating impacts of sequestration in recent years would no longer affect Contract Support Cost (CSC) which is a fee on top of federal funds for the administration of Indian IHS and BIA funding.

A year ago, I was appointed by the National IHS Director to serve on the IHS-CSC Work-group just over a year ago to identify solutions to the back log of IHS Claims and to make the payment of CSC amounts routine and predictable. In 2014, my ad-

ministration successfully negotiated a settlement of past CSC claims and recovered \$1.3 million! This helped balance our 2014 budget. Stabilizing CSC funds will ensure continuity of essential programs and services.

The President's recommendation comes as the IHS-CSC Workgroup wraps up our yearlong charge - serving in an advisory capacity to the Interim IHS Director. We worked through all of the technical aspects of this complex issue and to develop a spreadsheet CSC calculator to demonstrate the predictability of the model, show accountability, and build confidence in the use of federal funds. I am humbled to have played a role in facilitating effective communications between tribal representatives and our federal partners. It was an historical feat for which our ancestors would be proud.

On the national scale, the President's proposal for IHS alone would make CSC funding reoccurring and mandatory at \$800 million in the first year, \$900 million in year two and \$1 billion annually in year three! Our portion of this is over \$600,000. This move would also make CSC "X-Year" or "Zero Year" funded meaning it is not subject to recessionary efforts if the amount is not used in a single fiscal cycle.

The work left to do is to urge Congress to uphold their Constitutional and trust responsibility in honoring the treaties by permanently enacting this legislation to make CSC funds mandatory. I have pledged to use my role as a CSC Workgroup Member, VP the Mid West Alliance of Sovereign Tribes and the National Congress of American Indians (Midwest Region) to complete this final task. We need your help, to ensure Congress supports the President's proposal. We recently did a statewide mailing. If you have not yet done so, or did not receive a letter, we need you to send a letter to your Member of Congress. Contact information follows.

IHS-CSC Workgroup: Far Left, Cathy Abramson ~ then NIHB Chair,; Front Row Center ~ IHS Interim Director Dr. Yvette Robideaux; Back Row to the Right of center, Chairperson Aaron Payment, IHS-CSC Workgroup Member.



SENATE INDIAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF NCAI

By Aaron A. Payment, MPA

Good Afternoon Chairman Barrasso, Vice-Chair Tester and Members of the Committee. My name is Aaron Payment, Chair of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa. Thank you for allowing me to testify on behalf of NCAI on tribal priorities for this Congress. I am pleased to be here for your first hearing as Chairman, Senator Barrasso and I thank the new and returning Committee members for your service. NCAI is committed to continuing its strong relationship with this Committee so that we can partner to improve the lives of Native people throughout Indian Country.

This partnership was evident last week when Chairman Barrasso delivered the Congressional response to NCAI's State of Indian Nation's address. This is a relationship that is built on trust. The trust responsibility has developed over hundreds of years through the Constitution, numerous treaties, and federal laws. President Cladosby reminds us that the trust relationship is one that we have inherited. Tribal leaders are elected to uphold this trust relationship, and as Senators, it is one that you agree to uphold when you take the oath of office. Thank you for your partnership and commitment here.

Tribal Homelands

In exchange for ceding millions of acres of our homelands, tribes reserved the right to continued self-government, and to exist as distinct people on our own lands. That is why the first priority we must request today is legislation to protect our homelands ~ lands that are necessary for economic development, cultural protection, natural resource management, housing, education, and tribal infrastructure. Since 2009, this Committee has held numerous hearings and favorably passed legislation in each of the past three Congresses which affirms the original intent of the Indian Reorganization Act and would allow the Secretary of the Interior to take lands into trust for all tribes. We ask this Committee to take swift action to introduce and PASS *Carrieri* fix legislation. In modernizing the trust relationship, we must first have certainty over our lands.

Trust Modernization

Indian land and natural resources are a primary source of economic activity for tribal communities, but the federal trust resource management system is antiquated, inefficient, and contributes to a lack of investment in many reservation economies. NCAI points to two pieces of legislation that would immediately spur economic development and trust reform.

The first is Senate bill 209, a bill to amend the **Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Act of 2005**, introduced by the Bi-Partisan team of Senators Barrasso and Tester. This bill will streamline Secretarial approval of energy development transactions on Indian lands and give tribes more autonomy over developing our own energy resources. NCAI looks forward to working with the Committee to pass this legislation.

Another trust effort that NCAI supports is legislation that Senator Crapo introduced last session to establish a demonstration project allowing comprehensive land use planning and allocation of trust funding in accordance with tribal priorities. NCAI supports introduction of this legislation in the 114th Congress and recommends removing barriers in the appraisal, probate, land consolidation, and leasing processes.

It is imperative that Congress work with NCAI, tribal organizations, and tribal leaders to modernize the trust system into a process that recognizes that we are in the best position to make innovative and long lasting decisions for our communities.

Tribal Infrastructure

Thank you Chairman Barrasso for making infrastructure issues a priority. In order to attract economic development, teachers, law enforcement personnel, and capital investments to our tribal lands, we must meet our basic infrastructure needs. The current transportation authorization, MAP-21 (which contains tribal programs for construction and maintenance of highways, roads, bridges, and transit) is set to expire in May. With an annual budget of \$450 million, the construction and maintenance needs of tribes continue to fall behind and create unsafe conditions for all citizens who use our roads.

In addition the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act expired in September of 2013. This bill is an excellent example of how tribes are exercising our right of self-determination to **design and implement** our own housing programs. Our housing needs of Indian Country are great. Reauthorization of NA-HSDA is critical to continue to meet the housing needs of our members. We also ask that this Committee hold hearings and introduce legislation to address the infrastructure needs of tribes in the areas of irrigation, housing, transportation, and broadband.

Conclusion:

My friends here will speak to issues of healthcare and education. I call your attention to additional areas in our written testimony, including: juvenile justice, tribal taxation, public safety, veterans' issues and more.

I ask that our written testimony entitled: **"Promoting Self-Determination: Modernizing the Trust Relationship"** be entered into the record for today's hearing.

Funding decisions made by Congress are an explicit expression of the trust relationship between our governments. I respectfully request that the members of this Committee, 8 of whom are also on the appropriations committee...please use your voices to uphold this trust relationship. Your leadership will make a difference for our future generations.

Chi McGwitch, Negee, on Behalf of NCAI, my Tribe and American Indians Across this Great Land!

OPPOSE GRAY WOLF LEGISLATION

The Gray Wolf was recently put back on the endangered species list by court order. As a Tribe, we have consistently objected to recreational hunting of wolves and have been highly critical of both the rationale and the implementation of the 2013 Michigan wolf hunting season. Congressman Dan Benishek supports a bill that would lift existing federal protections for the Gray Wolf under the Endangered Species Act, effectively permitting Michigan and other nearby states to again allow wolf hunting. Recreational hunting as a means to reduce wolf abundance is both ineffective and unnecessary, based on the most recent and credible scientific information. The Gray

"In my estimation, this new wolf hunt legislation is an entirely political issue and not one of citizen safety or even based on any acceptable science!"

~ Chairperson Aaron A. Payment

Wolf is an extremely important cultural species to our Anishinaabeg people.

We have witnessed the near extinction of wolves from the 1836 Treaty Ceded Territory and only recently, its slow recovery thanks to the protections of the Endangered Species Act. The most effective course of action is to down-list wolves to "threatened" status in Michigan and other nearby states to again allow wolf hunting. Recreational hunting as a means to reduce wolf abundance is both ineffective and unnecessary, based on the most recent and credible scientific information. The Gray

Please contact your Congressional Representa-

tives and tell them to reject this bill. To download a sample letter for these issues, or find how to contact your Member of Congress, please go to: our web page at:

www.saulttribe.com

Or, if you would like assistance, call our toll free number at:

1 (800) 793-0660

...and ask for Mike McCoy or Jennifer Dale-Burton.

Please help us help our Tribe by writing to your representatives on these important matters. Our future generations depend on our actions today!

Call: **800-793-0660** Cell: **906-440-5937** Email: **chairpersonpayment@saulttribe.net** Facebook **'Aaron Payment'**

WATCH SAULT TRIBE BOARD MEETINGS ON LIVESTREAM: **http://new.livestream.com/TOSSABCS2**

Chi-McGwitch, Negee!

Aaron