

Daily Newsletter

74TH ANNUAL CONVENTION & MARKETPLACE



THURSDAY & FRIDAY EDITION



“Public service is a public trust.”

David Bernhardt
Deputy Secretary
Department of the Interior (DOI)

THURSDAY

On Thursday, October 19, 2017, attendees gathered for the Fourth General Assembly, which included an update from Department of the Interior (DOI) Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt, who reconfirmed in his remarks the commitment to tribal infrastructure and energy development.

Bernhardt explained DOI’s move to streamline administrative processes and procedures as a means towards development of meaningful policy change. Bernhardt went on to further express DOI’s commitment to the government-to-government relationship with tribes.

“I do believe that consultation is meaningful—that it is a dialogue,” said Bernhardt. “[DOI is making a] commitment to a vision for improving the lives of rural Americans—tribal and non-tribal.”

Bernhardt also remarked on key issues facing Indian Country, including those involving Native youth, education, health care, the opioid crisis, and tax. DOI is looking to address these specific areas in the coming weeks and months.

NCAI Youth Commission Co-Presidents Mikah Carlos and Brian Barlow, Co-Vice President Rory Wheeler, and Secretary Lance Sanchez preceded Bernhardt and spoke to the crowd about their work, and made asks of tribal leaders and youth alike to empower Native youth from every community.



UNITY, Inc.
UNITY Co-Presidents Sophie Tiger and Hamilton Seymour give a special presentation during the Fourth General Assembly.



NCAI Youth Commission Officers
The NCAI Youth Commission Officers gather at every NCAI Annual Convention & Marketplace and NCAI Mid Year Conference to present a report to the General Assembly.

(L to R) NCAI Youth Commission Co-President Brian Barlow, Co-President Mikah Carlos, Secretary Lance Sanchez, and Co-Vice President Rory Wheeler.

“We work to uplift the Tribal Behavioral Health Agenda (TBHA) as one of our platforms—we know that culture is prevention,” said Carlos. “We hope to increase opportunities for youth to be heard. We also wish to be consulted when programs are implemented that affect us—we are the experts on the solutions that are working, and what is not working. To the youth: we challenge you to take back what you have learned this week and make positive change in your communities.”

National Indian Education Association (NIEA) President Dr. Jolene Bowman continued the momentum in the discussion about Native youth and spoke about how NIEA continues to advocate for Native control of Native education and works to ensure former Title VII will continue. As NIEA look towards its 50th anniversary in 2019, Dr. Bowman says, “we remain strong.”

National Indian Health Board (NIHB) Chair Vinton Hawley gave a comprehensive health care policy update, noting their continued tracking of the Affordable Care Act and Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) along with the Restoring Accountability in the Indian Health Service Act of 2017. Hawley also spoke about the First Kids 1st Initiative – Every Child is Sacred (FK1st) partnership and the ability to host the NIHB inaugural Youth Health Policy Fellowship as part of FK1st!

National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA) Chairman Ernie Stevens, Jr. spoke from the heart about his mother seated in the audience and her 30-year career in drug and alcohol abuse prevention. Addressing the opioid crisis in Indian Country through his story, Stevens also remarked on the NIGA training series on active shooters. The training takes a close look on the do’s and don’ts during an active shooter crisis and prepares casino staff for worst-case scenarios.

Chairman Stevens then invited NIGA Executive Director Jason Giles to the stage to provide a gaming policy update to the General Assembly.

National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC) Chairwoman Sami Jo Difuntorum talked about the links between mental illness and opioid addiction as part of an emerging trend she is finding with the Native housing crisis, which will only be further impacted by the expiration of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act (NAHASDA).

“What we’re seeing a trend in is people who have mental illness. It’s a fact,” said Difuntorum. “We had a tribal elder incarcerated due to mental illness. The judicial system and jails are becoming mental health providers—that’s not acceptable.”

NAHASDA 2017 has yet to be reauthorized in this Congress, however, NAIHC is working closely with both the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate with eight co-sponsors and bi-partisan support to make this reauthorization a reality.

“I’d like to think that low-income housing of Native people would be an easy lift,” said Difuntorum. “But it’s not.”

Native American Financial Officers Association (NAFOA) Chairwoman Cristina Danforth focused her remarks on taxation and expressed the immediate need for tribal leaders in the audience to reach out to their members of Congress in coming months to ensure Indian Country is part of the conversation around tariffs and taxes effecting tribal communities.

“Unity in tax reform—we need to be included,” said Danforth. “In the coming months, we look forward to working on reform and infrastructure plans. The framework leaves many questions unanswered and there are most likely going to be deep cuts to federal programs. We anticipate most of October and November to be focused on revising the framework. Everyone needs to weigh in now—especially on the Ways & Means Committee. The earlier we get in the conversation, the better chance we have for success.”

The remainder of the Fourth General Assembly was dedicated to NCAI Executive Council elections. At 10:30 a.m., NCAI Elections Committee Chair Juanita Ahtone, with the assistance of NCAI Credentials Committee Chair Yvonne Oberly, announced the 2017-2019 Executive Council election results.

The race for NCAI presidential was very close, resulting in a runoff between outgoing NCAI 1st Vice President and Quinault Indian Nation President Fawn Sharp and Chickasaw Nation Lt. Governor Jefferson Keel.



Dr. Jolene Bowman



Vinton Hawley



Chairman Ernie Stevens, Jr.



Jason Giles



Sami Jo Difuntorum



2017-2019 NCAI President:
Chickasaw Nation Lt. Governor
Jefferson Keel



2017-2019 NCAI 1st Vice President:
Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa
Indians Chairperson
Dr. Aaron Payment



2017-2019 NCAI Recording Secretary:
Pauma Band of Mission Indians
Traditional Councilwoman
Juana Majel-Dixon



2017-2019 NCAI Treasurer:
Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe
Chairman/CEO W. Ron Allen



Cristina Danforth



John Echohawk



Senator Tammy Baldwin (WI)



Roger White Owl

The run-off vote was calculated and resulted in a less than two percent margin, making Chickasaw Nation Lt. Governor Jefferson Keel the 22nd NCAI President.

The meeting adjourned with a special presentation for outgoing NCAI President Brian Cladoosby.

The Fifth General Assembly, themed “Updates from around Indian Country,” started the afternoon with an update from the Tribal Supreme Court Project by Native American Rights Fund (NARF) John Echohawk and NCAI General Counsel John Dossett, which included updates on Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) cases on fishing rights, gaming, and motor oil and fuel taxes on a tribal corporation. Dossett closed with the NCAI tax update featuring an outline on dual taxation reform and tribal authority to collect taxes.

Senator Tammy Baldwin (WI) could not join us in person, but sent her best wishes through a video message played during the afternoon. Baldwin also took the opportunity to address grave concerns for the tribal communities in her home state and what she is doing in Congress to support them. She spoke about her co-sponsorship of an Amber Alert bill for Indian Country to protect Native children and “fighting back” when the federal and state governments refuse to acknowledge tribal consultation requirements.

The second half of the afternoon continued the “Updates from around Indian Country” theme and included updates on tribal energy development, food sovereignty, and health and wellness.

Roger White Owl of MHA Nation gave the update on the Initiatives to Reduce Barriers to Tribal Energy Development.

“No one knows our homelands better than us,” said White Owl. White Owl further addressed the assembly on the need to end dual taxation and for a boost in economy to enliven tribal livelihood.

Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative Director Janie Simms Hipp gave an update on the 2018 Farm Bill. She also emphasized the importance of preserving the Office of Tribal Relations within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and encouraged attendance at the Consultation on U.S. Department of Agriculture Reorganization that evening.

St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin Chairman Lewis Taylor ended the Fifth General Assembly and spoke on health and wellness, stating that “sovereignty is the basis of our survival.”



FRIDAY

On October 20, 2017, the Sixth General Assembly wrapped up the 74th Annual Convention & Marketplace with the four NCAI Administrative Board Officers, 12 Regional Vice Presidents, and 12 Alternate Vice Presidents being sworn into office, as well as remarks by newly confirmed U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Deputy Secretary Steven Censky.

“[USDA] hosted a consultation yesterday evening and there was very good information that I received,” said Censky. “There are many areas where collaboration is strong and areas where improvements can be made, including the education of our personnel. There are many programs that USDA has that impact Indian Country including the proposed reorganization of the Office of Tribal Relations.”

Censky went on to talk about the identified six strategic goals for USDA including: 1) Ensure USDA programs are delivered effectively, and efficiently focus on customer service; 2) Maximize ability to prosper; 3) Promote agricultural exports from the U.S.; 4) Work towards rural prosperity; 5) Stewardship of private lands; 6) Productive and sustainable use of the U.S. Forest Service; and 6) Provide all Americans a safe, nutritious food supply.

The Resolutions Committee Report rounded out the morning with individual reports given by the Committee Chairs of the Economic, Finance & Community Development Committee, Human Resources Committee, Land & Natural Resources Committee, Litigation & Governance Committee, and Veterans Committee.

After review of resolutions on the floor, the NCAI Membership adopted 50 resolutions in total before closing out the final General Assembly with the retiring of colors and an honor song by a drum group from the Ho-Chunk Nation.



Janie Simms Hipp



Deputy Secretary Censky

Veterans Committee Honors Deputy Director Robert Holden With Eagle Feather



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