

NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #ECWS-10-007

TITLE: Department of Education Consultation on Indian Education



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WHEREAS, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

WHEREAS, the historic Indian Nations Summit held on November 5, 2009 in Washington, D.C. with the Obama Administration provided a forum to begin meaningful collaboration and dialogue on mutual goals of Indian Tribes/Alaskan Natives, and Congress to protect and advance the needs of Native children and youth; and

WHEREAS, the recent passing of Senator Edward Kennedy also highlighted the 40th Anniversary of the "Robert Kennedy Report on Indian Education" which brought to the attention of Congress the dismal and grossly inadequate conditions of educational institutions serving Native children and which has reinvigorated tribal interest to ensure improvement of the educational conditions of Native children and youth; and

WHEREAS, strides have been made in the past 40 years to secure educational opportunities at the tribal level; however, public education and federally funded schools continue to be controlled by state, regional and federal policy makers who often times impose unintended consequences, such as, inconsistent and fragmented policies, standards and unfunded mandates that are not reflective of the Indian Tribes/Alaska Native values and cultural foundations, which further diminishes Indian Tribes/Alaska Native's role to exercise sovereignty and self-sufficiency effectively; and

WHEREAS, despite continuing efforts of tribal governments, state and federal assessments demonstrate Indian Tribes/Alaska Native children and youth perform below their peers in academic achievement, have high drop-out rates, and a smaller percentage seeking higher education, which raises concerns about equitable and

culturally responsive educational quality of federal and state support for our students in these schools; and

WHEREAS, on January 11, 2010, Interior Secretary Salazar held an Indian Education meeting with Assistant Secretary Larry Echohawk, National Indian Educators and U.S. Department of Education Secretary Duncan who shared plans to advance the Administrations' version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Reauthorization (No Child Left Behind); however, Indian Country has not been included in consultation planning regarding the President's Memorandum of November 5, 2009 on Tribal Consultation or Executive Order 13175; and

WHEREAS, discussions and recommendations have been made by the National Indian Education Association to strengthen the Indian Education Act and other titles within the ESEA; however there are still emerging needs and issues to be incorporated within the ESEA provisions that will strengthen tribal control of Indian education; and

WHEREAS, a preliminary meeting is scheduled to be held March 23, 2010 to discuss ESEA Reauthorization and provide comments including those comments and recommendations of Indian Country.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that NCAI requests the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs (SCIA) to launch a series of hearings that will thoroughly investigate the education conditions of Native children and youth in Indian Country, similar to the Kennedy Report that provided a comprehensive assessment to Congress in 1969, which highlighted the educational failures affecting our Indian children and youth; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, these hearings should build on current Indian Education themes that include, but are not limited to, local control at the tribal level; governance of Reservations with multiple schools systems (public, state, federally funded, etc.); federal appropriations; Native languages revitalization; culture based education, methodology, assessments and pedagogy; impact aid and accountability; early childhood education; special education and behavioral health; adult vocational education; higher education and scholarships; tribal colleges; tribal education departments; school and education facilities, tribal driven research on effective educational practices; and effective administrative oversight of Bureau of Indian Education funded schools; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, while NCAI requests these Indian Education hearings, it is understood the hearings can also take the form of, but are not limited to: site visits, teleconference, school visits, and listening sessions to comprehensively assess and make recommendations for a plan of action, including necessary legislation to strengthen and address tribal control of Indian education; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI urges the SCIA to collaborate with the Secretary of Education and Interior to monitor and individual tribes and tribal consortiums including NCAI the status of the Administration's progress on the

Indian Tribes/Alaska Native Consultation regarding the ESEA reauthorization and prior to Indian Education legislative recommendations being considered to be introduced in the 111th Congress; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that NCAI supports the SCIA in its plans to seek tribal consultation and further requests that the SCIA appraise the Senate Health Education Labor and Pension (HELP) Committee of this effort for coordination among the ATNI, SCIA, and Senate HELP committees.

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