

**THE NATIONAL CONGRESS OF
AMERICAN INDIANS**

RESOLUTION #SPO-01-058

Title: Welfare Reform Reauthorization

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 major programs in the basic federal welfare law, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), expire at the end of Fiscal Year 2002 and must be reauthorized during the coming session of the U.S. Congress; and

WHEREAS, in many respects PRWORA has proven to be inadequate to meet the needs of Indian families and Indian communities; and

WHEREAS, American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments are committed to: strengthening Indian families; protecting the interests of Indian children; promoting family self-sufficiency; substantially reducing dependence on public assistance; and developing economically prosperous and culturally thriving Indian communities; and

WHEREAS, the Administration and the Congress have the responsibility to consult with tribes in developing a new welfare law.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the NCAI does hereby insist that any new welfare reform legislation fully support the government-to-government relationship between tribal governments and the U.S. government; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI supports adequate funding for the full range of services required to meet the needs of impoverished Indian families; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI supports funding for the legal, economic and service delivery infrastructure needed by tribes, including start-up and capacity-building funds, to assume full responsibility for the many functions and services involved in welfare reform; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI supports direct funding for tribal governments from all federal programs that provide needed support services to children and families receiving welfare services, such as the Title IV-E foster care program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI supports an expanded recognition of the responsibility of tribal governments, authorizing tribes, at their option, to determine eligibility for the food stamp and Medicaid programs and facilitating the ability of tribes to administer the food stamp and Medicaid by waiving federal matching fund requirements; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI supports the inclusion of provisions in any future welfare reform law, giving flexibility to adapt federal resources to individual tribal needs at the local level; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI supports provisions which will enable tribes, at their option, to include funding for all service programs related to welfare reform under their self-governance compacts and/or P.L. 102-477 integrated service plans; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI supports provisions which provide tribes the right to be consulted by federal and state governments on all policies which affect Indian people; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI supports tribal-specific programs and funding in any future welfare reform law to address the serious economic deprivation in Indian communities which makes it difficult or impossible to transition Indian people from welfare to work; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI supports provisions which encourage constructive cooperation between tribal and state governments in furthering self-sufficiency for Indian people and to encourage state governments to assist tribal TANF programs with funding deficiencies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI supports making the reduction of poverty for all Americans a fundamental goal of welfare reform; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI supports “work stops the clock” provisions allowing tribes and states to continue providing cash assistance to welfare recipients transitioning to work without counting the receipt of such benefits toward the TANF lifetime limit; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI supports amending the disregard of months of assistance for adults living on Indian reservations or Alaska Native villages with 50 percent joblessness or greater by deleting the requirements of 50% joblessness and “stopping the clock” for months of assistance where TANF recipients cannot meet work requirements because of the lack of employment in tribal communities or the lack of jobs for which the recipient is qualified; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI opposes TANF provisions that single out Alaska tribes, treating them differently than tribes in other states, by limiting the administration of Tribal TANF to the 12 regional non-profit corporations and by requiring Alaska Tribal TANF programs to be comparable to the state of Alaska’s TANF program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI supports retaining the TANF block grant structure, including the continued ability of tribes to determine their TANF service area and service population; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this 2001 Convention of NCAI in Spokane, Washington instructs the NCAI Welfare Reform Task Force and the NCAI staff to continue to work with the tribes, inter-tribal organizations and Indian advocacy groups and inter-state groups to develop specific legislative recommendations for the reauthorization of the welfare reform law; and

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

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted at the 58th Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Spokane Convention Center, in Spokane, Washington on November 25-30, 2001 with a quorum present.

Tex Hall, President

ATTEST:

Colleen Cawston, Recording Secretary

Adopted by the General Assembly during the 58th Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Spokane Convention Center, in Spokane, Washington on November 25-30, 2001.