NPAIHB POLICY BRIEF

SCIA Views & Estimates Letter on FY 2008 Budget

PREPARED BY: NORTHWEST PORTLAND AREA INDIAN HEALTH BOARD

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Senate Committee on Indian Affairs releases Views & Estimates letter on FY 2008 Budget

On March 1st, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs (SCIA) submitted its "Views and Estimates" letter on FY 2008 funding for Indian programs to the Senate Budget Committee.

The Views and Estimates letter sets forth the SCIA's funding recommendations for consideration by the Budget Committee in developing the annual budget resolution. In preparation for its letter, the SCIA conducted an oversight hearing on February 15, 2007 and solicited written testimony from Tribes and Tribal Organizations. Highlights addressing Indian health issues include:

- SCIA requests the Budget Committee include sufficient funding in the 302(b) allocations to cover costs associated with funding programs under the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (p. 2);
- Discussion on Indian health disparities (p. 4);
- The Committee addresses six general comments (p. 6) of which, four directly deal with health care issues in Indian Country:
    - Passage of the IHCIA
    - Infrastructure development and facilities construction
    - Contract Health Service (CHS) funding
    - Funding for mandatory costs (inflation, population growth, pay cost increases) for IHS and BIA programs

The Committee's recommends that sufficient funding in the budget resolution be included to address the $1 billion in health facilities construction and $482 million backlog in maintenance and improvement (M&I) projects. While Northwest Tribes are supportive of M&I funding, they do not support facilities construction given the inequities in the allocation funding for construction projects.

The Committee does a commendable job of requesting funding for the CHS program stating that estimates indicate a need of at least $301 million in additional funding. **The SCIA requests an additional $51 million for CHS over the President's request for a total increase of $100 million over the FY 2007 continuing resolution**. The SCIA relied on a report issued by the NPAIHB (see Policy Brief No. 15: CHS Program-An Assessment of Unmet Need, August 18, 2006) for its recommendation on additional funding for the CHS program.

The SCIA makes a strong case for funding mandatory costs of pay act increases, inflation, population growth, and staffing for new facilities. The Committee recommends $273.8 million to cover these costs.
It also requests additional funding to restore the Urban Indian program and restore funding that has been eroded from the IHS base budget to maintain current services for "outyears" (see p. 11).

In addition to the IHCIA, the SCIA makes recommendations on reauthorizing the Special Diabetes Program for Indians. The Committee recommends that this very important program be reauthorized at $200 million for FY 2009-2014.

IHS Budget Highlights:

- SCIA supports $273.8 million to fund current services (pay costs, inflation, population growth, staffing at new facilities).
- Committee supports $126 million to restore FY 2007 funding base from the level of the President's request to the level of the FY 2007 Continuing Resolution.
- SCIA requests that the Urban Indian health program be restored to the FY 2006 enacted level or at $36 million and that additional funding be provided to do so; no offset of current program funds.
- The committee recommends that additional funding be provided to address the "continuing backlog of critically needed health care facilities" and that it is concerned about the continued one year pause in facilities construction from FY 2006.

A copy of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs" Views and Estimates letter is attached for your review.

NPAIHB Policy Brief is a publication of the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board, 527 S.W. Hall, Suite 300, Portland, OR 97140. For more information visit www.npaihb.org or contact Jim Roberts, Policy Analyst, at (503) 228-4185 or by email jroberts@npaihb.org.

students. Because of this, the proposed FY 2008 funding levels for Indian education programs are disappointing.

Title VII, No Child Left Behind: We request a modest increase of 5% (or $9.3 million over the FY 2007 Continuing Resolution level) for Title VII, Native Education. No Child Left Behind Title VII provides critical support for culturally-based educational approaches for Native students, and has produced many success stories in bridging the achievement gap for these students.

Tribal Colleges: We ask that the Department of Education budget for Tribal Colleges be increased from $23.5 million to $32 million in FY 2008 to fund basic development and construction grants. Tribal Colleges and Universities serve some of the most impoverished areas of the country, yet are the most poorly funded post-secondary institutions. These young institutions have dramatically increased access to higher education for American Indians, but are in great need of additional funds for infrastructure, facilities, faculty, curriculum development and student services. As noted above, these tribal colleges serve a useful purpose by bringing higher educational opportunities to remote Indian communities, by preparing Indian students for future leadership roles, and by supporting tribal economic endeavors. This recommended increase in FY 2008 will help to bridge the gap that tribal economies experience and to prepare them for advanced competitiveness.

In addition, the Committee disagrees with the proposed eliminations of various Department of Education programs serving Native Americans, and urges their restoration:

Education for Native Hawaiians: This program funds supplemental education programs for Native Hawaiian children, such as family-based education, special education, gifted and talented education, higher education, curriculum development, teacher training and recruitment, and community-based learning. This program was previously funded at $33.9 million.

Alaska Native Equity Education: This program funds supplemental education programs for Alaska Native children, including educational planning, curriculum development, teacher training, teacher recruitment, student enrichment, and home-based instruction for pre-school children. This program was also previously funded at $33.9 million.

Strengthening Alaska Native- and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions: This program funds post-secondary programs for Alaska Native- and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions to improve and expand their capacity to serve students. This program was funded at nearly $12 million in FY 2006 and FY 2007.

F. Environmental Protection Agency

Clean Water State Revolving Fund: The EPA State and Tribal Assistance Grants program is made up of two components: infrastructure assistance under the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) and categorical grants. The Committee is concerned that the proposed FY 2008 level funding is inadequate for the CWSRF. The CWSRF helps both tribes and states meet their significant infrastructure needs by funding the construction of wastewater treatment facilities and other water projects, including non-point source, storm water, and sewer overflow. The total funding proposed for tribes and states in FY 2008 is $687.5 million – identical to the FY 2007 funding with no adjustments for inflation. The level of need for Indian tribes alone is greater than the total proposed. The Indian Health Service estimated in FY 2006 that Indian Country would require more than $684 million to correct inadequate and non-compliant wastewater systems or to construct systems where none currently exist. Yet tribes only receive 1.5% of CWSRF appropriations, which would be $1.085 million of the proposed amount. Level funding for this program should be maintained, adjusted for inflation.

Water for Alaska Native Villages: The State and Tribal Assistance Grants program's infrastructure assistance program component provides for construction of wastewater and drinking water facilities to address

serious sanitation problems. The EPA estimates that more than 20,000 homes in Alaska Native villages lack basic sanitation facilities. The Indian Health Service estimated in FY 2006 that it would cost more than $340 million to address the worst deficiencies in Alaska villages, which have inadequate or non-compliant wastewater treatment systems and lack safe water supply and sewage disposal systems. The Committee is concerned that the $15.5 million proposed for FY 2008 is inadequate to address the worst sanitation problems confronting Alaska villages, although that level of funding is higher than that provided by the FY 2007 Continuing Resolution.

G. Department of Agriculture

Rural Development: The Committee notes that the President's FY 2008 budget proposes (1) to reduce funding for rural development programs – particularly rural utilities, (2) to replace rural development grant funds with increasing loan funds, and (3) to replace direct loan funding with federally-guaranteed loan funds. Each of these policy decisions would negatively impact Indian Country where grants are necessary for infrastructure development and lending is often impracticable for rural tribal governments.

The Committee recommends that the Budget Committee restore rural development programs to the FY 2006 funding levels and reject the proposals in the budget request to replace grant funds with loan funds, particularly the Rural Business-Cooperative Service's Rural Economic Development Program and Renewable Energy Section. We also ask the Committee to restore funding for the Rural Business Service's Enterprise Grant and Rural Business Opportunity Grant programs, which tribes are eligible to receive to further tribal development.

For FY 2008, the budget request proposes a reorganization of the Rural Community Advancement Program (RCAP), currently one program funding rural community, housing and utilities programs. While this Committee does not have an opinion on the President's proposed reorganization plan, we are concerned that the proposed funding for

Indian and Native American water and waste water programs under a proposed Rural Utilities Service is insufficient. Of particular concern is the proposed elimination of the Rural Native Alaska Water Systems grant and loan funding, which funds water and waste disposal loans and grants for the development of safe water systems for rural and Native villages in Alaska. The Committee opposes this program elimination, and recommends that this program be funded in FY 2008 at the FY 2006 enacted level of $25 million.

H. Department of Health and Human Services

Head Start: The Head Start program provides a viable source of educational and social integration and development for Indian children from birth to 5 years of age and engages the parents in such curriculum and programmatic development. Historically, the Indian Head Start programs have received a 2.9% set-aside in the total funding for Head Start. However, the population growth and costs of inflation support a 4% set-aside for Indian Head Start programs, which is also reflected in S. 556, the *Head Start for School Readiness Act,* reported out by the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee on February 12, 2007.

Administration for Native Americans: We recommend that the FY 2008 budget for the Administration for Native Americans, in the Department of Health and Human Services, be increased by $10 million to a total of $54 million to support Native language immersion and restoration programs, as authorized by the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act of 2006. Research shows that Native American children who participate in immersion programs perform better than their Native peers who do not. We believe this program is a sound educational investment.

The Committee on Indian Affairs appreciates the opportunity to give our views on the FY 2008 budget request, and looks forward to continuing to work with you to ensure that programs that serve

American Indians and Alaska Natives are adequately funded.

Sincerely,

Byron L. Dorgan
Chairman

Craig Thomas
Vice Chairman