

Veteran's Committee Meeting notes, January 19, 2021

Debbie Jones, Samish Indian Nation

Stephanie Birdwell, VA – Office of Tribal Government Relations

Terry Bentley, VA – Office of Tribal Government Relations

Don Head, NPAIHB

The meeting began with a review of the priorities that were previously generated by the committee. It was noted that one of the priorities, the establishment of a Veterans Administration Tribal Advisory Committee, was accomplished through H.R. 7105, Section 7002, enacted as public law on January 5, 2021. The rest of the priorities were forwarded through, unchanged.

Stephanie Birdwell updated the committee on the recent changes in the Veterans Administration:

- H.R. 6237, concerning VA reimbursement to IHS for services to tribal veterans for Purchased/Referred Care (PRC)
- H.R. 7105:
 - section 3002, concerning AI/AN no longer subject to copayments for services
 - section 4206 concerns coordination of services under HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing
 - section 7002, establishes a new VA tribal advisory committee (TAC)
- VA/IHS Tribal Consultation on the VA/IHS MOU. A Dear Tribal Leader Letter was sent out on December 2, 2020 for a 90-day consultation notice and comment period. Two informational/listening sessions were completed on December 9, 2020 and January 8, 2021. Two more are scheduled for January 27, 2021 and February 17, 2021.
- The Tribal HUD-VASH expands program dollars by \$3.2M, and allows for the current 26 tribes who have this grant to apply for additional funding in addition to allowing new tribes to apply for funding.

Stephanie Birdwell also commented on the priorities identified by the committee, and suggested a future WebEx meeting on the topic of EHR interoperability between the VA/IHS/DoD. She will reach out to the Veterans Health Administration about this priority.

Debbie Jones asked about the reimbursement of PRC to tribes that did not have clinics, but still provided services through PRC. Stephanie Birdwell replied that the nuts and bolts of the recently passed legislation will need to be worked out, because right now the entry point for PRC reimbursement is usually on the tribal side. There are also other factors, including a determination at VA to pay for community health care, and the benefits package that the veteran is eligible for.

The meeting was adjourned at 130p.