



Message from the Chair

Dear Fellow Caucus Members,

It was great to see many of you at the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) Annual Meeting in Boston, Mass. Sixteen caucus members attended a variety of sessions throughout the week on topics ranging from health to climate change. Thanks to those who attended for re-electing me as caucus chair. It is a duty I take seriously, and I welcome any input you can pass along to help make the caucus more effective. In addition, Representative Joey Jayne (Mont.; Navajo) was elected Vice-Chair, Representative Jonathan Windy Boy (Mont.; Chippewa-Cree) Secretary, Representative Lisa J. Billy (Okla.; Chickasaw/Choctaw) Treasurer and Representative Reggie Joule (Alaska; Eskimo) Peace Keeper. Congratulations to these valuable and active caucus members.

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Representative John
McCoy*

The caucus also held a reception during the NCSL Annual Meeting to honor former state senator and representative Chief Enoch Kelly Haney (Okla.; Seminole). Chief Haney was the original visionary for the caucus, organizing it in 1992 as the National Council of Native American Legislators. He created the 22 foot sculpture "The Guardian" that sits atop the Oklahoma State Capitol Dome; Chief Haney was extremely gracious in allowing NCSL's State-Tribal Institute to use the sculpture's likeness as the institute's official logo. It was an honor for all of us to be in his presence. To learn more about Chief Haney and his art, see (<http://www.kellyhaney.com/>).

The NCNASL Education Committee had a busy fall. In late September, the committee convened an Education Summit to help inform the research underway on the achievement gap issues facing American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian students. Senator Carol Juneau (Mont.), chair of the committee, provides a detailed update on the committee's progress with this project in this issue of the NCNASL newsletter.

On November 27, just before NCSL's Fall Forum in Phoenix, Ariz., several caucus members participated in a Policy Summit with the Arizona Commission of Indian Affairs and Arizona Inter-Tribal Council. Chairs of the Community Wellness and Criminal Justice; Environment, Water, Natural Resources and Energy; Health and Human Services; and Economic Development Committees held a strategic planning session in Las Vegas, Nev., on December 9-10. More information about these two meetings will appear in the January newsletter.

As many of you know, I recently took some time out of my regular schedule for health reasons. I am working again and eager for the new year! I hope you all have a wonderful holiday season and I look forward to a productive new year for the caucus.

- Representative John McCoy (Wash.; Tulalip)

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Education Committee Update

By Senator Carol Juneau (Mont.; Hidatsa Mandan), Committee Chair

On September 28-29, the NCNASL Education Committee convened an Education Summit. Eighty participants from 15 states including several state legislators, state and tribal educational leadership, and legislative staff met to discuss preliminary results of the research findings and action strategies that will form the basis for the final achievement gap report. Chris Lohse, lead researcher for the project, was on hand to outline his findings including data from 11 states. The Education Summit was an important component of the project, and it provided an opportunity for stakeholders and policymakers to look at current research and discuss recommendations that the caucus can use in advocating for change that can improve the educational outcomes for Native children in their respective state public education systems.

In October, several members of the Education Committee attended the National Indian Education Association's (NIEA) annual convention in Honolulu, Hawaii. Caucus members had the opportunity to attend general policy sessions during the convention. Preliminary findings and goals of the achievement gap report were presented during a plenary session, as well as during a workshop. Mr. Lohse provided a project update and stressed the importance of the report for state-tribal relations and the opportunity it presents for all groups to collectively aid Native students. Caucus members also visited several Native Hawaiian schools and programs. Highlights of the visits included a media production studio run by high school students and a tour of a K-8 school that is experiencing significant success with Native Hawaiian students. Our gratitude is extended to Representatives Karen Awana, Mele Carroll and Faye Hanohano who were gracious and thoughtful hosts.

In November, Education Committee members met at the NCSL office in Denver, Colo., to review the draft report and work on policy recommendations. The next steps for the Education Committee are to continue to refine the report, finalize policy recommendations and publish the final report. The release date for the report is scheduled for the last week in January.

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NCNASL Member Activities

NCNASL Members Attend NCSL EM Roundtable and STGWG Meeting

In October, caucus members Representative Albert Tom (Ariz.; Navajo), Chair of the NCNASL Environment, Water, Natural Resources and Energy Committee, and Representative Scott BigHorse (Okla.; Osage and Cherokee), Vice-Chair, participated in the NCSL Environmental Management (EM) Roundtable and the State and Tribal Government Working Group (STGWG) meeting in Snowbird, Utah.

The NCSL EM Roundtable brings state legislators together to receive federal updates on the cleanup of the former nuclear weapons complex. States with Department of Energy (DOE) sites housing Cold War legacy waste appoint legislators to the group, and NCSL provides a forum where members can openly discuss cleanup issues with their colleagues from around the country facing similar challenges. The EM Roundtable also discussed the status of transuranic waste shipments to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) near Carlsbad, N.M., progress

of the Bush administration's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) and disposal of Greater Than Class C low-level radioactive waste.

The STGWG meeting was held in conjunction with the NCSL EM Roundtable. STGWG, originally formed in 1989, is composed of state and tribal members who work to ensure that DOE facilities are operated and cleaned up efficiently and in compliance with federal and state laws and treaty rights, while protecting human health and the environment.

STGWG heard from Steven J. Morello, the new Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental and External Affairs at DOE. Mr. Morello was recently appointed as the Director of the DOE Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs, an office created under the Energy Policy Act of 2005. Mr. Morello is a member of the Sault Ste. Marie tribe of Chippewa Indians in Michigan.

Representatives Tom and BigHorse provided important insight to both groups on a number of issues of interest to their committee, including radioactive waste transportation and uranium mining.

A summary of the EM Roundtable will be available on the NCSL webpage in the coming weeks.

NCNASL Members Attend Cardiovascular Disease and Health Disparities Conference

In October, the NCSL State-Tribal Institute held a meeting to address cardiovascular disease and health disparities. More than 50 legislators and legislative staff attended, including several caucus members and their staff. The meeting, held in Boston, Mass., brought together experts in the fields of cardiovascular disease, cultural competence, community health programs and legislative policies to discuss the latest research and strategies for developing policies to reduce cardiovascular disease in the general population and targeted populations.

In addition to plenary presentations, meeting participants visited the Whittier Street Health Center, a 30,000 square foot urban community health center providing primary health care and outreach services to nearly 12,000 individuals from diverse communities. Whittier employs 125 multicultural and multilingual staff to provide over 30 health programs. Attendees also visited the Asian Pediatric and Adolescent Services Clinic at the Tufts-New England Medical Center. The clinic, established in 1997, rests in the heart of Chinatown and provides pediatric care that is culturally and linguistically appropriate to its Asian patients. The clinic provided meeting participants with a view of what a mainstream hospital can do to address the needs of a specific population.

NCNASL members attending the conference were Representatives Shannon Augare (Mont.; Blackfeet), Karen Awana (Hawaii), Mele Carroll (Hawaii), Faye Hanohano (Hawaii), former Senator Dennis Bercier (N.D.; Turtle Mountain Chippewa) and former Representative Mark Cloer (Colo.).

Leader-to-Leader Symposium Held in Oklahoma

NCNASL member Representative Scott BigHorse (Okla.) attended a leader-to-leader symposium in Oklahoma in mid-October. The purpose of the meeting was to bring together tribal and state leaders from across Oklahoma to discuss four



critical issues facing all Oklahomans. Panels were convened during the symposium on health, business, sovereignty and education.

The health panel focused on diabetes and the Harold Hamm Oklahoma Diabetes Center (newly established by the University of Oklahoma) and its advancements in the research and study of diabetes in both Indian and non-Indian communities. The business panel focused on the profitability of Indian lands and the benefits of tribal trust and restricted lands. The sovereignty panel focused on the long-established legal precedent of tribal sovereignty that still exists within tribal jurisdictions. And the education panel focused on higher education and tribal opportunities through major universities and partnerships for tribal community colleges.

Participants at the symposium acknowledged that non-Native attitudes toward Native American businesses are changing and there is more of a willingness from state and local officials to work directly with tribes. As participant Kevin Grover, Director of the Smithsonian Institute's National Museum of the American Indian, said, "Indians and Indian Tribes are no longer just part of Oklahoma's heritage. To say that, suggests they are things of the past. Native Americans are central to Oklahoma's present and future."

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Tribal Legislative Workshop Held in Arizona

On October 8, Representative Albert Tom (Ariz.) participated in the second annual Tribal Legislative Workshop in Flagstaff, Ariz., which was sponsored by the Arizona Commission of Indian Affairs. The Tribal Legislative Workshop is an opportunity for tribal leaders to meet face-to-face with a state legislator to learn more about the state legislative process, to raise issues and concerns that their tribes are facing, and to learn how to become more effective in seeing their issues and concerns addressed by state government.

Representative Tom stressed to the tribal leaders the importance of formulating strategies for introducing legislation and staying involved every step of the way. Also mentioned were the potential benefits that can result when tribes work together on legislation, rather than as individual tribes. NCSL staff member Bob Fry also attended, and he presented information about the caucus and distributed copies of NCNASL resolutions to show how the caucus can help address tribal issues at the federal and state levels.

Available Reports

Report Released on Native Communities and Climate Change

The Natural Resources Law Center at the Colorado University School of Law recently released a report entitled *Native Communities and Climate Change: Protecting Tribal Resources as Part of National Climate Policy*, which examines how climate change is likely to affect Native American communities throughout the United States. The report is available at: (<http://www.colorado.edu/law/centers/nrlc/pubs.htm>).

"Status of Cancer" Report Released

A study authored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Cancer Society, the National Cancer Institute and the North American Association of Central Cancer Registries, in collaboration with the Indian Health Service and the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine, provides a comprehensive review of cancer rates among Native Americans. The report is available at: (<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/CancerReport/>).

Practical Guide to the Indian Child Welfare Act

The Native American Rights Fund/National Indian Law Library has produced a new publication entitled *Practical Guide to the Indian Child Welfare Act*. The publication is an informative resource for tribal, state and federal entities that are involved in Indian child custody proceedings. The guide is available at: (<http://narf.org/icwa/>).

Bureau of Indian Affairs and Bureau of Indian Education: Schools in Need of Immediate Action

This brief report describes the poor conditions at some BIE schools that need immediate attention in order to protect the health and safety of the students and faculty. The report is available at: (<http://www.doioig.gov/upload/2007-G-00232.pdf>).

Walking a Mile: A First Step Toward Mutual Understanding, A Qualitative Study Exploring How Indians and Non-Indians Think About Each Other

This study explores the attitudes of American Indians and non-Indians about Indians' heritage, historical roles, relationships and contributions to society, as well as their views about each other. The study is available at: (<http://www.publicagenda.org/research/pdfs/walkingamile.pdf>).

EPA Websites

Tribal Portal: This is part of EPA's commitment to strengthen its partnership with Indian tribes and governments to protect human health and the environment. The website makes it easier to locate environmental information within EPA and other government agencies. (<http://www.epa.gov/tribalportal>)

Indian Country Underground Storage Tank Program: This report to Congress describes the progress that tribes and EPA have made in preventing and cleaning up releases from underground storage tanks. (http://epa.gov/oust/fedlaws/final_trtc.htm).

Farm, Ranch and Rural Communities Advisory Committee: This newly formed committee will advise on environmental policy issues impacting farms, ranches and rural communities, and includes tribal agricultural groups. (<http://www.epa.gov/ocem/faca/index.html>)



Upcoming Events

National Black Caucus of State Legislators 31st Annual Legislative Conference

Little Rock, Ark.
December 12-16, 2007

Transportation External Coordination Working Group

San Antonio, Texas
February 6-7, 2008

California Nations Indian Gaming Association 13th Annual Western Indian Gaming Conference

Palm Springs, Calif.
February 12-15, 2008

National Congress of American Indians Executive Council Winter Session

Washington, D.C.
March 3-5, 2008

National Conference of State Legislatures Spring Forum

Washington, D.C.
April 22-26, 2008

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