



National Indian Education Association

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NIEA RESOLUTION 11-019

TITLE: Urge Congress to Support Continued Funding for Tribal Colleges, Including United Tribes Technical College and Navajo Technical College.

WHEREAS, the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) was established in 1970 for the purpose of advocating, planning, and promoting the unique and special educational needs of American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians; and

WHEREAS, NIEA as the largest national Indian organization of American Indian, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiian educators, administrators, parents and students in the United States, provides a forum to discuss and act upon issues affecting the education of Indian and Native people; and

WHEREAS, through its' unique relationship with Indian nations and tribes, the federal government has established programs and resources to meet the educational needs of American Indians, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiians, residing on and off their reserved or non-reserved homelands; and

WHEREAS, one of the fundamental trust responsibilities of the United States, recognized in treaties, statues, policies and court decisions, is education of Tribal citizens; and

WHEREAS, within the past few months, the United States Congress continues to review various proposals that would drastically reduce the trust obligation of the United States in the area of higher education, including: 1) A proposal submitted by Senator Tom Coburn of Oklahoma to the Budget Deficit Committee created by Congress in this year that would completely eliminate funding for Tribal colleges, along with reductions in many other Indian programs; and 2) A bill recently introduced by Senator Scott Brown of Massachusetts, S. 1743, that could eliminate funding for Indian career and technical institutions, such as United Tribes Technical College and Navajo Technical College, on the basis of a report from the General Accounting Office provided to Congress earlier this year; and

WHEREAS, neither the Sen. Coburn fund reduction proposal nor the legislation proposed by Sen. Scott Brown are based on any understanding of the purpose of the Tribal colleges and Tribally controlled career and technical institutions and the value of these institutions to the Tribes and to Tribal citizens, and to the economy of the United States in general; and

WHEREAS, in particular, the Coburn proposal ignores the fact that Tribal colleges are all well managed, and provide higher education programs to more than 30,000 students at 37 institutions throughout Indian country; and

WHEREAS, the Sen. Brown legislation, S. 1743, incorrectly uses the Government Accountability Office (GAO) report dated March 1, 2011, as supplemented on March 18, 2011,

to suggest that any program identified in those reports should be eliminated as duplicative; that is not the recommendation of the GAO, rather, the purpose of the report was to identify programs whose purposes overlapped, and the GAO recognized specifically that some programs provided benefits that need to be provided and that they may serve different constituencies, even if the purposes of some programs overlapped; and

WHEREAS, it is critical to understand that programs that fund Tribal colleges, including career and technical training institutions, are meant to correct centuries of harm done to Tribal Nations and Tribal citizens and to assist our citizens become productive citizens not only of the United States, but also of our Tribal Nations and further, and that these institutions are critical to the economic development of our Tribal nations; and

WHEREAS, for example, United Tribes Technical College, and Navajo Technical College, provide education to more than 2,000 Tribal citizens each year; these institutions provide support mechanisms for students that allow them to receive an education in a culturally supportive environment, at institutions accredited by nationally recognized accrediting institutions, and provide education at a reasonable and affordable cost per student that is far less than institutions supported by the states or other institutions of higher education supported by the United States; and

WHEREAS, the reductions to funding for Tribal colleges and tribally controlled career and technical institutions proposed by Senators Coburn and Brown fail to recognize the fact that tribal colleges do not have any significant amount of state funding and that the elimination of federal funding would be devastating to these institutions, their students, and staff; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that NIEA hereby supports full funding by the Federal government for Tribal colleges and tribally controlled career and technical training institutions, including United Tribes Technical College and Navajo Technical College and rejects proposals from Senators Coburn and Scott Brown that would devastate these institutions and create tremendous disruptions to the lives of the students attending these institutions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NIEA further requests that Congressional leadership reject the elimination of funding for Tribal colleges and tribally controlled career and technical training institutions and that our institutions of higher education be fully funded by the United States in compliance with the trust responsibilities of the United States to its American Indian citizens; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the NIEA Board of Directors hereby directs its Executive Director to ensure that the present Presidential Administration and appropriate Congressional leaders and Committee Chairmen receive a copy of this Resolution and that this policy goal be pursued until it is accomplished.

Submitted by: Dr. David Gipp