Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

"The Success of [Tribal] Self-Governance has been nothing short of astounding" **– Chief Wilma Mankiller**

Dear Colleague:

We invite you to join us in sponsoring the Tribal Self-Governance Act Amendments of 2009, H.R. 4347, to provide much needed reform and parity in negotiations between tribal governments and the federal government for services affecting Indian country.

H.R. 4347 would amend Title IV of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 to provide greater legal authority to Native American Tribes as they pursue, at each Tribe's option, the goal of transferring authority and responsibility from the federal program bureaucracy to tribal program administration.

Title IV was enacted in 1994 to accomplish three primary goals: (1) to place the federal government's Indian programs firmly in the hands of the local Indian people being served; (2) to enhance and empower local tribal governments and their governmental institutions; and (3) to correspondingly reduce the federal bureaucracy. Title IV was designed to reduce federal micromanagement of tribal programs and allow tribes to set their own priorities and determine how program funds should be allocated and administer their own operations for the benefit of their own people to whom they are directly accountable.

In the year 2000, the Congress worked with tribal leaders to enact similar self-governance reforms for the Indian Health Service (IHS). Most of the Tribes operating health-related self-governance programs also operate BIA-funded natural resource and social programs, but the BIA-funded self-governance requirements lack the benefit of the reforms enacted in 2000. As a result, tribes are forced to operate under two different standards. The bill we have introduced would align BIA rules to those we applied to IHS in 2000.

H.R. 4347 would clarify how tribes may apply to participate in self-governance and what funds and programs are eligible for self-governance administration. The bill would apply uniform negotiation rules and appeal procedures to self-governance, and establish clear payment and audit structures that facilitate tribal control and responsibility. This bill will not add any federal costs; rather we expect it will generate considerable savings since it will streamline federal oversight and operations.

Tribal leaders have long been seeking this change in law. They helped to shape this legislation and, with me, are seeking the committee's consideration of this bill. Please contact Wendy Kirchoff in Rep. Dan Boren's office at 5-2701 or wendy.kirchoff@mail.house.gov to cosponsor or if you have any questions.

Respectfully yours,

Rep. Dan Boren

Rep. Don Young

Rep. Dale Kildee

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