

STATEMENT OF GARY GAIKOWSKI, CHIEF OF POLICE, SISSETON WAHPETON LAW ENFORCEMENT OF THE SISSETON WAHPETON OYATE, LAKE TRAVERSE RESERVATION, AGENCY VILLAGE, SD 57262, FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS, HONORABLE BYRON L. DORGAN, CHAIRMAN

March 18, 2010

Honorable Senator Byron L. Dorgan, and members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs:

On behalf of the Sisseton Wahpeton Law Enforcement of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate of the Lake Traverse Reservation, at Agency Village, SD, in northeast South Dakota and southeast North Dakota, we thank the United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs for providing the opportunity to present testimony with regard to the subject of Bureau of Indian Affairs and tribal police recruitment, hiring, training, and retention. These are critical areas of concern for our Sisseton Wahpeton Law Enforcement agency, and we are prepared to provide testimony at this time.

The Sisseton Wahpeton Law Enforcement on the Lake Traverse Reservation exercises policing and detention responsibilities for a resident tribal population of 6,800 tribal members who reside throughout a 5 county rural area in northeast South Dakota and two rural counties in southeast North Dakota. Our responsibilities include the protection of 14 tribal member communities throughout this million acre area in two States. Our agency operates and is partially funded by a P.L. 93-638 Self Determination Contract from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and has the unique distinction of being funded by non-federal funds from our own tribal government, which provides fully 50% of funds from tribal revenues, so as to assure minimum operational costs and needs in law enforcement for our reservation.

Our Tribal Law Enforcement Agency views the subject of recruitment of police and detention officers as being an extremely critical need for our overall community. Our experience indicates that recruitment of tribal members from our communities to serve as police and detention officers is an essential ingredient in assuring effective law enforcement for the benefit of our residents. Funds currently are needed to put in place an effective police and detention officer recruitment program, particularly for younger tribal members who are enrolled in elementary, secondary school, and at our local college. We assert this need based upon the fact that fully 40% of our resident tribal member population is less than 16 years of age, hence it would be an advantage to target

this significant portion of the resident population for recruitment as tribal police and detention officers. We stand prepared to network and coordinate recruitment efforts with our tribally owned and operated schools and college, provided that federal funding initiatives are made available for these initiatives.

Secondly, the hiring and training of police and detention officers for our Law Enforcement Agency also are critical areas of concern and priority. The majority of applicants for police and detention positions in our Agency do not have prior or previous experience in law enforcement or detention. Our Agency therefore is compelled to utilize limited federal-BIA and tribal funds to send our newly hired police officers to training at the BIA Police Academy on an annual basis, since our Agency is required to employ personnel who are BIA certified as police officers. The provision of training also is direly needed to maintain our certification of officers on a full time basis. Due to this situation, we therefore urge that federal funds be appropriated for more training opportunities for our police and detention officer applicants on an annual basis. Such an initiative would empower our Agency to link recruitment with the hiring and training of eligible applicants to become employed as police and detention officers in our Law Enforcement Agency.

Thirdly, the retention of police and detention officers in our Law Enforcement Agency also is a matter of great concern. Currently, due to limited federal funding, it has been a challenge to provide a level of salaries for our police and detention officers at a comparable level of pay as is the case for their counter parts employed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Without the full support and endorsement of our Tribal government, which provides non-federal funds for our Agency, we would not be able to provide adequate salaries for our police and detention officers. In order for our Agency to retain good and effective police and detention officers, we therefore urge more federal dollars for salaries of our officers, which would enhance and assure retention of our officers.

Our Agency currently requires 16 police officers on a full time basis, and we now have 12 officers employed, which places much stress on our officers. Our detention center requires the services of 7 detention officers, and we currently employ 3 detention officers on a full time basis, which again has served to over extend our detention officers. Any consideration that Congress can provide for our situation would be greatly appreciated in our time of need.

In closing, we want to express our appreciation to the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs for providing us with the opportunity of preparing and submitting testimony today.

Sincerely,

Gary Gaikowski
Chief of Police
Sisseton Wahpeton Law Enforcement