

**TESTIMONY OF
IVAN D. POSEY, CHAIRMAN
OF THE
EASTERN SHOSHONE BUSINESS COUNCIL
TO THE
UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE
ON
INDIAN AFFAIRS
ON THE
PRESIDENTS
2008 FUNDING REQUESTS FOR
TRIBAL PROGRAMS**

FEBRUARY 15, 2007

Good morning. My name is Ivan Posey and I currently serve as the Chairman for the Eastern Shoshone Business Council and Co Chair for the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Joint Business Council. We both share the 2.3 million acre Wind River Indian Reservation in west central Wyoming which is the only reservation in the state. The reservation was established in the 1868 treaty between the Shoshone Tribe and the federal government.

There are currently 3900 Eastern Shoshone and 8200 Northern Arapaho tribal members. Over 50% of tribal members from both tribes are under the age of 30. The reservation is home to approximately 7000 American Indians and 9000 non-Indians.

First of all I would to thank the distinguished Senators on the committee, including our own Senator Craig Thomas, for allowing me to testify on funding issues related to the Presidents 2008 federal budget.

Let me start my testimony with a statement regarding the Presidents Budget for Tribal Programs in this manner. I have served the Eastern Shoshone Tribe for 11 years and throughout that time have had the opportunity to travel to our Nations Capitol to address the needs of tribal citizens and to share our positive contributions to our great country. It has become more challenging over the years to receive the funding needed to adequately address tribal needs.

The Presidents FY 2008 Budget remains in the same mold with cuts to Indian education, health care, and other tribal programs drastically while completely eliminating other vital funding.

For example, the Johnson O'Malley program which many tribes utilize for language and traditional revitalization has been completely eliminated from the budget. This would affect our school systems and Head Start programs that rely on this funding to assist

tribal efforts to continue educating our youth of their heritage. With the passing of many of our elders this process becomes of more importance to our tribal communities. Cuts to other education matters such as construction, and grant assistance need to be increased as well as the need to increase funding for tribal colleges which are all vital to the citizens of Tribal Nations.

Cuts to our tribal court systems would drastically affect the administration of justice in Indian Country which in some cases is already under funded. The tribal court system serves as the backbone of our sovereignty and needs adequate funding. Without a strong and reputable tribal court system tribes will face the scrutiny and criticism from Indians and non Indians alike on the credibility of our administration of tribal laws and codes. With the gains made in Indian Country to establish and manage tribal courts we cannot afford to continue to make progress in this very important area.

Law Enforcement remains a top priority in terms of public safety for Indian Country. On the Wind River Indian Reservation we currently have 10 officers to patrol roughly 3500 square miles. We need more uniformed patrolman to continue to provide safety to our communities and address the problems of substance and drug abuse. Additional funding is also needed for tribal Fish and Game programs which oversee our natural resources and provides assistance to our law enforcement agencies when needed. Currently the Eastern Shoshone Tribe employs five fish and game officers which are funded directly from tribal funds.

The need for adequate housing in Indian Country continues to grow. Although there has been progress in Indian Country in addressing this matter over the past years we still have a ways to go. Through tax credits and utilization of the 184 program some needs are being met on and off reservations but the need continues with the growth of young families and the need to sometimes restore and rebuild aging infrastructure. The elimination of the Housing Improvement Program in the Presidents budget would be very harmful to tribes who utilize the funding to renovate elderly and handicapped homes and at times provide homes to tribal people in need.

There are many issues in the area of health care that I would like to address. Regarding the need for additional funding for Indian Health Service there are three areas that are of importance to tribal citizens. The first is the need for additional funding for contract health services. Contract Health Services allows for immediate care for those in medical crisis. Over the past 10 years these costs have not kept up with rate of inflation and have basically remained flat budgets. Tribal governments such as ours on the Wind River Reservation are currently covering costs associated with the inadequate funding the Indian Health Service currently receives. To receive contract health services a person needs to be in a life or death situation. For example, a person may be in a car accident due to substance abuse and receives injuries which threaten their life. This one car accident in itself may cost the local service unit \$400,000.00 out of a \$1.3 Million dollar budget. In the meantime a person needing a knee replacement for several years will be denied services. Many emergency room visits are not paid by the Indian Health Service which eventually falls on the patient who may not have the means to pay and is soon

turned into collection agencies. This has affected many tribal members who may wish to finance a home through other federal programs such as the 184 program offered through Housing of Urban Development.

Substance abuse and diabetes continue to rise in Indian Country. Methamphetamine use has a tremendous negative affect on our community and resources are needed on the law enforcement, prevention, and treatment areas to address this devastating drug. Innovative programming that deals with family intervention and after care support are critical to the recovery and well being of individuals who seek help. Access to treatment in Indian Country is also a barrier at times when family involvement is needed. Regional Treatment Centers are needed across the country that will assist tribes to provide their citizen's with better access and support.

Diabetes is an area in which many tribal people are affected. Many young people are now being diagnosed with this disease that used to mostly affect adults. Funding to Indian Country over the past years have allowed tribes like ours to develop tribal gyms and to promote healthy eating and exercise in our communities. Although there continues to be a rise in diabetes I feel funding to tribes has helped curb some of these numbers for the better.

With the continued cuts to health care in Indian Country I would ask members of congress, from both parties and independents, to continue to address the reform of the health care system in this country. The rising costs of pharmaceuticals and the lack of

access to health care in many communities has placed this country in a crisis mode. For Tribal Nations to continue to look after the needs of its citizens health care I firmly believe these issues need to be addressed. Corporate greed continues to have priority over the well being of our nation's citizens. Tribal Governments, as well as states, are subject to this health care crisis.

I would also ask the members of Congress to carefully evaluate the War in Iraq. With military spending up and a record deficit, the President's budget cuts domestic spending. Being an Army Veteran I understand the importance of serving our great country and the responsibility of safeguarding our people. Tribal people have and continue to serve in our Armed Forces at a rate higher than any other group in the United States. We have always answered the call. The cuts to the Veterans Administration are of concern to our tribal communities as well. As many veterans return from service many need additional help. We would like our returning veterans to receive the care and respect they deserve.

In closing, I would like to thank the committee on listening to my concerns as an elected official of my tribe. I am encouraged that many members of congress acknowledge and respect the trust responsibility from the United States Government to Indian Tribes. As we continue to defend our treaties and executive orders we will also continue to defend this great country of ours.

Who Wee Who (Thank You) and God Bless