

Statement of Introduction by Dr. Gerald Hill, President of the Association of American Indian Physicians

Hearing to Consider the Nomination of Dr. Yvette Roubideaux to be Director of the Indian Health Service

Senate Committee on Indian Affairs

April 23, 2009

Good afternoon Chairman Dorgan, Vice Chairman Barrasso, and members of the Committee.

My name is Dr. Gerald Hill. I am a member of the Klamath Tribes of Oregon, and a practicing emergency physician in St. Paul, Minnesota. I am also the elected President of the Association of American Indian Physicians, a national, non-profit organization made up exclusively of American Indian and Alaska Native Physicians. It is a great honor to be here today to introduce and to express our support for Dr. Yvette Roubideaux's nomination for Director of the Indian Health Service.

The mission of the AAIP is to pursue excellence in Native American health care by promoting education in the medical disciplines, honoring traditional healing practices and restoring the balance of mind, body and spirit. Dr. Roubideaux, a Harvard-trained physician, is a member of the Association and one of our finest examples. She has earned a national reputation for excellence in all of her professional endeavors.

Dr. Roubideaux's Native heritage and understanding of the community, as well as her development into a respected leader, physician, teacher, mentor and colleague, will provide her with a strong foundation should she be confirmed as Director of the Indian Health Service. Further, Dr. Roubideaux has witnessed the challenges of Indian health first-hand. Her work as a physician in the Indian Health Service for the San Carlos Apache Tribe and in the Gila River Indian community required that she not only understand western medicine but also how to apply this knowledge in Native communities.

Dr. Roubideaux is among the most intelligent and dedicated people I have ever met. She has worked as a primary care physician in Native American communities, led Native people in the fight against diabetes, mentored Native students, advised tribes and government agencies, and, as president of the AAIP, served as a leader for Native physicians. I have witnessed Dr. Roubideaux in discussion with tribal leaders in several settings. She shows the proper respect and interacts with them in familiar ways, has the courage to speak frankly and honestly to all, and always from her heart. It is Dr. Roubideaux's breadth of work in all these areas that sets her apart and will ultimately lead to an outstanding career as IHS Director.

Dr. Roubideaux's most outstanding work is her leadership and passion in the fight against the diabetes epidemic. I know this Committee is keenly aware of Dr. Roubideaux's integral role in the implementation and multiple reauthorizations of the Special Diabetes Program for Indians, which provides funding for 399 IHS, Tribal and Urban diabetes programs across the nation.

Such accomplishments are what make Dr. Roubideaux an outstanding choice for Director of the Indian Health Service. Dr. Roubideaux represents, for Native people, hope and intelligence, compassion and caring, education and achievement, and more. She represents the best that Indian people have to offer our communities and the Nation.

I cannot think of another person more suited to lead the Indian Health Service. On behalf of the Association of American Indian Physicians, we sincerely appreciate this opportunity to introduce Dr. Yvette Roubideaux to the Committee and support her nomination. The vast scope of her knowledge and experience combined with her passion and commitment to the health and well-being of Native communities uniquely qualify her for the position of Director of the Indian Health Service.

Thank you for the privilege and honor of introducing this outstanding Native woman to the Committee.