

Lillian A. Sparks

Nomination for Commissioner of Administration for Native Americans (ANA)

Nominated: October 23, 2009

PUBLIC RELEASE

SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

**BIOGRAPHICAL AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION REQUESTED OF
DEPARTMENT/AGENCY NOMINEES**

Instructions: Nominees are asked to provide typed answers to each of the following questions. It is requested that the nominee type the question in full before each response. Do not leave any questions blank. Type "None" or "Not Applicable" if a question does not apply to the nominee. Please return printed answers to Committee.

Begin each section (i.e., "A", "B". etc.) on a new sheet of paper.

A. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1. Name: (Include any former names or nicknames used.)

Lillian Azalea Sparks

2. Position to which nominated:

Commissioner, Administration for Native Americans, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

3. Date of nomination:

October 23, 2009

4. Address: (List current place of residence and office addresses.)

Residence:

[REDACTED]
Washington, DC 20020

Office:

National Indian Education Association
110 Maryland Avenue NE, #104
Washington, DC 20002

5. Date and place of birth:

October 16, 1975, Towson, MD

6. Marital status: (Include maiden name of wife or husband's name.)

Single

7. Names and ages of children: (Include stepchildren and children from previous marriages.)

N/A

8. Education: (List secondary and higher education institutions, dates attended, degree received, and date degree granted.)

Georgetown University Law Center
August 1998-May 2001
Juris Doctor, May 2001

Morgan State University
September 1993-December 1997
Bachelor of Arts, June 1998

9. Employment record: (List all jobs held since college, including the title or description of job, name of employer, location of work, and dates of employment, including any military service.)

Executive Director
National Indian Education Association
Washington, DC
May 2004-Present

Staff Attorney
National Congress of American Indians
Washington, DC
September 2001-May 2004

Summer Law Clerk
National Indian Gaming Commission
Washington, DC
May 2000-August 2000

Summer Law Clerk
Air Force Legal Services Agency, Environmental Law and Litigation
Rosslyn, VA
May 1999-August 1999

Monitoring Specialist
Amerix
Columbia, MD
June 1996 (approx.)-August 1998

10. Government experience: (List any advisory, consultative, honorary or other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments, other than those listed above.)

None

- 11. Business relationships: (List all positions held as an officer, director, trustee, partner, proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, company, firm, partnership, or other business enterprise, educational or other institution.)**

None

- 12. Memberships: (List all memberships and offices held in professional, fraternal, scholarly, civic, business, charitable and other organizations.)**

Maryland Bar Association (January 2002- January 2006, October 2009-present)

National Congress of American Indians, Lifetime Member (2003-present)

The Links, Incorporated, Member, (2003-present)

Gathering of Nations, Miss Indian World Committee, Member (2002-present)

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, Member (1998-present)

Federal Bar Association (2004-2009)

DC Native American Bar Association (2002-2005) (approximate)

- 13. Political affiliations and activities:**

- (a) List all offices with a political party which you have held or any public office for which you have been a candidate.**

None

- (b) List all memberships and offices held in and services rendered to all political parties or election committees during the last 10 years.**

Volunteer, Obama For America, March 2008-November 2008

- (c) Itemize all political contributions to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity of \$500 or more for the past 10 years.**

None

- 14. Honors and awards: (List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, military medals and any other special recognitions for outstanding service or achievements.)**

Scholarships

Morgan State University, Honors Scholarship (1993, 1994)

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, Patapsco Chapter (1993)

American Indian Heritage Foundation (1998)

Special Recognitions

Miss Indian World (2000)

USA Magazine, "Young Leader in Indian Country" (2004)

15. Published writings: (List the titles, publishers, and dates of books, articles, reports, or other published materials which you have written.)

None

16. Speeches: Provide the Committee with two copies of any formal speeches you have delivered during the last 5 years which you have copies of on topics relevant to the position for which you have been nominated.

I have not delivered any formal speeches.

17. Selection:

(a) Do you know why you were selected for the position to which you have been nominated by the President?

I believe I was selected to be nominated for the Commission for the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) due to my experience working with tribal governments, my understanding of the policies affecting tribal governments at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), my knowledge of tribal programs benefiting from HHS initiatives, and my proven strong work ethic and enthusiasm to increase services for youth and families in tribal communities.

(b) What in your background or employment experience do you believe affirmatively qualifies you for this particular appointment?

I believe that my lifelong career in public service coupled with my extensive experience in policy formulation impacting youth and children in tribal communities qualifies me for the appointment of ANA Commissioner. Specifically, I have strengthened provisions in and worked to increase funding for many of the programs at the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at HHS, including ANA, Office of Head Start, and the Indian Health Service. Additionally, I have visited many of the tribal grantees of ACF and have worked closely with HHS to strategize collaborative efforts between the tribal and federal governments.

B. FUTURE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS

1. Will you sever all connections with your present employers, business firms, business associations, or business organizations if you are confirmed by the Senate?

Yes

2. Do you have any plans, commitments, or agreements to pursue outside employment, with or without compensation, during your service with the government? If so, please explain.

No

3. Do you have any plans, commitments, or agreements after completing government service to resume employment, affiliation, or practice with your previous employer, business firm, association, or organization?

No

4. Has anybody made a commitment to employ your services in any capacity after you leave government service?

No

5. If confirmed, do you expect to serve out your full term or until the next Presidential election, whichever is applicable?

Yes

C. POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- 1. Describe all financial arrangements, deferred compensation agreements, and other continuing dealings with business associates, clients, or customers.**

Other than the retirement account listed on the attached financial statement, I have no financial arrangements, deferred compensation agreements, or other continuing dealings with business associates, clients, or customers.

- 2. Indicate any investments, obligations, liabilities, or other relationships which could involve potential conflicts of interest in the position to which you have been nominated.**

In connection with the nomination process, I have consulted with the Office of Government Ethics and the Department of Health and Human Services' Designated Agency Ethics Official to identify potential conflicts of interest. Any potential conflicts of interest will be resolved in accordance with the terms of an ethics agreement that I have entered into with the Department's designated agency ethics official and that has been provided to this Committee. I am not aware of any other potential conflicts of interest.

- 3. Describe any business relationship, dealing, or financial transaction which you have had during the last 10 years, whether for yourself, on behalf of a client, or acting as an agent, that could in any way constitute or result in a possible conflict of interest in the position to which you have been nominated.**

In connection with the nomination process, I have consulted with the Office of Government Ethics and the Department of Health and Human Services' Designated Agency Ethics Official to identify potential conflicts of interest. Any potential conflicts of interest will be resolved in accordance with the terms of an ethics agreement that I have entered into with the Department's designated agency ethics official and that has been provided to this Committee. I am not aware of any other potential conflicts of interest.

- 4. Describe any activity during the past 10 years in which you have engaged for the purpose of directly or indirectly influencing the passage, defeat, or modification of any legislation or affecting the administration and execution of law or public policy.**

During the past 10 years, I have engaged in the following activities for the purpose of directly or indirectly influencing the passage, defeat, or modification of any legislation or affecting the administration and execution of law or public policy:

- Advocated for the enactment of the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Act of 2006, including providing testimony before congressional Committees, preparing talking points and briefing papers, and facilitating congressional meetings, resulting in increased funding for Native American language and immersion programs at the Department of Health and Human Services.
- Facilitated a series of field hearings/listening sessions resulting in legislative amendments to the No Child Left Behind Act, which were subsequently included in the base discussion bills drafted by the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and the House Education and Labor Committees.

- Strengthened the tribal provisions in the reauthorization of the Head Start Act through partnership with the National Indian Head Start Association and advocated for increased consultation sessions on the new provisions within the Act.
 - Assisted in the facilitation and coordination of annual Department of Health and Human Services tribal budget consultations, and provided testimony on issues relating to the Office of Head Start, Indian Health Service, Child Care Bureau, and the Administration for Native Americans.
 - Coordinated and facilitated a summit on the importance of protecting Native American sacred sites and worked with the staff of the House Resources Committee to introduce the Native American Sacred Lands Act, legislation prohibiting the damage to sacred lands, providing access to sacred lands for Native practitioners, and providing funding to tribes through the Department of Interior to acquire and manage sacred lands.
 - Advocated for the Special Diabetes Project for Indians at the Department of Health and Human Services resulting in continued and increased appropriations for the program.
5. **Explain how you will resolve any potential conflict of interest, including any that may be disclosed by your responses to the above items. (Please provide a copy of any trust or other agreements.)**

Any potential conflicts of interest will be resolved in accordance with the terms of an ethics agreement that I have entered into with the Department's designated agency ethics official and that has been provided to this Committee.

6. **Do you agree to have written opinions provided to the Committee by the designated agency ethics officer of the agency to which you are nominated and by the Office of Government Ethics concerning potential conflicts of interest or any legal impediments to your serving in this position?**

Yes

D. LEGAL MATTERS

- 1. Have you ever been disciplined or cited for a breach of ethics by, or been the subject of a complaint to any court, administrative agency, professional association, disciplinary committee, or other professional group? If so, please explain.**

No

- 2. Have you ever been investigated, arrested, charged, or held by any Federal, State, or other law enforcement authority for violation of any Federal, State, county, or municipal law, regulation, or ordinance, other than for a minor traffic offense? If so, please explain.**

In May of 1994, when I was 18 years old, I was arrested for shoplifting while with "friends" engaging in that activity. I received a probation before judgment and volunteered at my college for 120 hours. My record has since been expunged.

On May 4, 2007, I received a moving traffic violation in Washington, DC on a Maryland driver's license. I paid the ticket on August 17, 2007; however, unbeknownst to me, my license was suspended 60 days after the ticket was issued. On April 21, 2008, when I applied for a DC driver's license, I was informed that my Maryland license was suspended. I paid the restoration fee to DC Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) on April 21, 2008, and my license was reinstated on that day.

On September 29, 2009, I was pulled over by a Maryland law enforcement officer due to a blown headlight. After running my license and registration, the officer informed me that my license was suspended in Maryland and advised me to call Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) to get more information. At that time, I was informed that my license was suspended on November 3, 2008 for the May 4, 2007 ticket, even though all fees were paid and my license was restored seven months prior. After talking with both DC DMV and MD MVA, I was advised that DC DMV failed to notify MD MVA that the suspension was lifted and have since provided proof to MD MVA that the ticket and fees were paid and cleared. However, I still received a court date of January 13, 2010 to appear in court for "driving on a suspended license" on September 29, 2009, despite the fact that my license should not have been listed as suspended at that time.

- 3. Have you or any entity, partnership or other association, whether incorporated or unincorporated, of which you are or were an officer ever been involved as a party in an administrative agency proceeding or civil litigation? If so, please explain.**

No

- 4. Have you ever been convicted (including pleas of guilty or *nolo contendere*) of any criminal violation other than a minor traffic offense? If so, please explain.**

No

- 5. Please advise the Committee of any additional information, favorable or unfavorable, which you feel should be disclosed in connection with your nomination.**

None

E. RELATIONSHIP WITH COMMITTEE

- 1. Will you ensure that your department/agency complies with deadlines for information set by congressional committees?**

Yes

- 2. Will you ensure that your department/agency does whatever it can to protect congressional witnesses and whistle blowers from reprisal for their testimony and disclosures?**

Yes

- 3. Will you cooperate in providing the committee with requested witnesses, including technical experts and career employees, with firsthand knowledge of matters of interest to the Committee?**

Yes

- 4. Please explain how if confirmed, you will review regulations issued by your department/agency, and work closely with Congress, to ensure that such regulations comply with the spirit of the laws passed by Congress.**

If confirmed, I will ensure that regulations issued by my department/agency follow the tribal consultation policies set forth by HHS and that all stakeholders receive adequate and prompt notification to participate in both the consultations and comment periods. I will work closely with the Committees of jurisdiction to ensure that the regulations are aligned with legislative intent of the laws, the accompanying reports, and other documents as necessary. I will work collaboratively with Congress and the Committee staff through open, honest, and frequent dialogue, sharing of documents (as permissible), and joint meetings to ensure that the policies and regulations promulgated by the department/agency are not counteractive to the intent of the law and work cohesively with legislative provisions to address or strengthen tribal programs.

- 5. Are you willing to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Congress on such occasions as you may be reasonably requested to do so?**

Yes

F. GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS AND VIEWS

- 1. How does your previous professional experiences and education qualify you for the position for which you have been nominated?**

My previous professional experience includes serving as a staff attorney for the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), where I worked on issues relating to tribal governments and youth and families, including health care, early childhood education, and religious protection. I have worked in a representative capacity on behalf of NCAI, participating twice as the organizational spokesperson at the United Nations sessions on International Indigenous Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland. Currently, I serve as the executive director of the National Indian Education Association (NIEA), where I lead the

efforts of the membership and Board of Directors on education issues impacting Native communities. In addition to policy formulation and legislative strategy, I manage and supervise coordination two large annual events, an annual convention with approximately 2,500 attendees, and a legislative summit with approximately 200 attendees. Additionally, I develop and monitor the organization's annual budget, identify and develop funding resources, develop partnerships with similar organizations, establish relationships with key decision makers in Congress and the Administration, implement the strategic plan developed by the Board of Directors, and supervise staff. My education includes a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Morgan State University, and a Juris Doctor in Georgetown University Law Center, where I participated in the highly competitive Federal Legislation Clinic.

2. Why do you wish to serve in the position for which you have been nominated?

I wish to serve as the Commissioner of ANA because I believe in the goals of self-sufficiency and cultural preservation established at ANA and the program priorities of increased services for youth and families of the Administration and the Department of Health and Human Services. It would be my honor to assist in implementing the Administration's national policy agenda for tribal communities, including economic and infrastructure development, early childhood education, language preservation, and the principles of tribal self-determination, tribal consultation, and tribal inclusion.

3. What goals have you established for your first two years in this position, if confirmed?

If confirmed, within the first two years as the Commissioner for ANA, I hope to accomplish the following:

- Promote the administration's ACF priorities and initiatives in Indian Country to ensure that tribal communities are aware of new grant opportunities at the Department.
- Strengthen the Intra-Departmental Council on Native American Affairs at HHS to ensure that Secretary of HHS is well informed on issues and best practices in Indian country as it relates to HHS.
- Collaborate with tribal governments and other stakeholders to provide increased services to ANA grantees and applicants through increased technical assistance, useful program evaluations, and convenings (trainings, conventions, etc.) as feasible.
- Strengthen the relationship between the office of ANA and Congress through increased and frequent communication and the development of shared policy priorities.
- Continue to foster the development of stable and diversified tribal economies, increase the prevalence of use of Native languages, and support programs that promote the well being of Native youth and families.

4. What skills do you believe you may be lacking which may be necessary to successfully carry out this position? What steps can be taken to obtain those skills?

A skill that I am looking forward to strengthening is large scale grant administration. I plan to work very closely with the career staff to learn of strengths, challenges, current practices, and efforts to be as efficient and responsive to the grantees, while being fiscally responsible as grant administrators. Although the learning curve may be steep in this particular area, I am a hard worker willing to review past and current practices and confident in my capacities to quickly assume this responsibility.

5. Please discuss your philosophical views on the role of government. Include a discussion of when you believe the government should involve itself in the private sector, when society's

problems should be left to the private sector, and what standards should be used to determine when a government program is no longer necessary.

As a student of political science and committed worker in the public sector, I am a strong believer that the role of government is to protect all citizens and those within our lands and territories, and to afford everyone equal access to basic human and civil rights. These rights should not be predestined by one's race, religion, color, creed, sex, orientation, abilities, or economic status. When appropriate to protect these rights, government should become involved; where our basic rights are not threatened and proper checks and balances already exist in the private sector, government should not become involved.

Government programs should be evaluated on a number of factors, including their usefulness to the intended beneficiaries, original purpose and current practice, and economic efficiency (cost-benefit analysis). There should not be one deciding factor that determines the efficacy of a government program; rather, the program should be evaluated as a whole, with regard to benefit to society, other opportunities that may be available, and funding levels (i.e., adequate or inadequate to successfully fully implement the program.)

6. Describe the current mission, major programs, and major operational objectives of the department/agency to which you have been nominated.

The current mission of ANA is "to promote the goal of self-sufficiency and cultural preservation for Native Americans by providing social and economic development opportunities through financial assistance, training, and technical assistance to eligible Tribes and Native American communities." Major programs include competitive discretionary grants for social and economic development, Native language maintenance and preservation, environmental regulatory enhancement, and marriage/fatherhood promotion initiatives. ANA has also partnered with the Indian Health Service to provide Native youth Community Emergency Response Training and First Responder Activities. ANA's major operational objectives include supporting the creation of stable tribal economies and reducing dependency on public funds and social services, supporting tribal access and coordination of Native children and family health and well being programs, and increasing projects in tribal communities involving youth and intergenerational activities.

7. What do you believe to be the top three challenges facing the department/agency and why?

I believe the top three challenges facing ANA are:

- Promotion of eligible grants and opportunities within HHS, outside of Indian Health Service (IHS) and ANA, to tribal communities;
- Working to fulfill the Department's priorities in ways that meet tribal/grantee needs; and
- The need for a stronger relationship with Congressional committees and staff.

I believe that all three challenges are the result of low to poor agency visibility and the need for better communication on the part of ANA. Additionally, stronger coordination among the various agencies in HHS will lead to more cohesive communication to Indian country on HHS programs.

8. In reference to question number six, what factors in your opinion have kept the department/agency from achieving its missions over the past several years?

I believe that ANA has done a fair job of promoting its mission over the past several years in terms of grant distribution for social and economic development and language preservation grants. However, in my opinion, ANA should focus more on policy development than has sometimes been the case in the past so we can build upon successful models funded by ANA grants.

9. Who are the stakeholders in the work of this department/agency?

The stakeholders are tribal governments (federally and non-federally recognized), American Indian and Alaska Native organizations, Native Hawaiian non-profit organizations, and Native populations throughout the Pacific basin.

10. What is the proper relationship between the position to which you have been nominated, and the stakeholders identified in question number nine?

The Commissioner of ANA is responsible to the stakeholders in ensuring that the office is compliant with all federal laws and regulations; is transparent in its grant review process and in the way it provides technical assistance; and fairly evaluates and monitors program grants. The Commissioner should also work diligently to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of similar grant opportunities and initiatives within the Department that are eligible to stakeholders, as well as to ensure that stakeholders are eligible grantees, where appropriate.

11. The Chief Financial Officers Act requires all government departments and agencies to develop sound financial management practices.

a) What do you believe are your responsibilities, if confirmed, to ensure that your department/agency has proper management and accounting controls?

Given that ANA manages a \$46 million budget and administers over 220 projects annually, I believe that it is very important that there are proper management and accounting controls in place to maintain the integrity of the office and of the Department. I will work very hard to ensure that all activities of the office are transparent and clear with regard to the application, review, and funding process of the grants. I will work closely with the Management Operations Staff to ensure that the ANA budget activities, including the collection of data, tracking of grant reports and other requirements, and contract expenditures are monitored and updated frequently. I will also comply with all Freedom of Information Act requests and ensure that our grant portfolios are assessed on a consistent basis so that funding is drawn down by the grantees.

b) What experience do you have in managing a large organization?

For the past five years, I have served as the Executive Director of the National Indian Education Association, where I have supervised and expanded the size of the staff from two full-time employees to five full-time employees and raised the necessary funds to accommodate the growth. Additionally, I have contracted with accounting and legislative consultants and increased membership for the organization through the creation of new participation opportunities and expanded membership categories. Throughout my tenure at NIEA, I have worked hard to improve the national profile of the organization through greater outreach to potential members, increased partnerships

with over a dozen prominent national organizations, and the development of relationships with federal agencies and congressional offices. With assistance of staff, I have also coordinated and supervised the organization's annual Conventions and Legislative Summits, promoting best practices and provide training and technical assistance to the attendees. Lastly, my experience included developing and managing the organization's annual budget of \$1.7 million and providing oversight in the monthly reports detailing expense and revenues.

12. The Government Performance and Results Act requires all government departments and agencies to identify measurable performance goals and to report to Congress on their success in achieving these goals.

a) What benefits, if any, do you see in identifying performance goals and reporting on progress in achieving those goals?

I am a firm believer in accountability and integrity in the work of any office, organization, corporation, or entity that has stakeholders or membership. It is incredibly important to identify performance goals to measure progress and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the services provided. Benefits to identifying and reporting on performance goals include identification of challenges or ineffective services, opportunities to reform outdated or outmoded practices, and opportunities to recognize successful and operational practices. It also allows the stakeholders to gain insight on the functions and operations of the office.

b) What steps should Congress consider taking when a department/agency fails to achieve its performance goals? Should these steps include the elimination, privatization, downsizing, or consolidation of departments and/or programs?

When a department/agency fails to achieve its performance goals, Congress should review the leadership and staff of the agency, including the stability of the leadership, staffing needs, funding of the agency compared to goals of the agency's programs, and practices of the agency to improve/increase efficiency.

Before taking steps towards elimination, privatization, downsizing, or consolidating departments or programs, Congress should evaluate the agency to ensure that the agency is designed to serve a societal need, and is receiving the support and resources necessary to be successful in program implementation. Congress should make every effort to partner/meet with the agency to determine why performance goals were not met and discuss strategies on how to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of that agency.

c) What performance goals do you believe should be applicable to your personal performance, if confirmed?

Performance goals applicable to my personal performance, if I am confirmed as Commissioner of ANA, should include:

- Timeliness of notice and distribution of grants;
- Grants oversight and management;

- Technical assistance and program information dissemination to grantees and potential grantees;
- Coordination of the agency's resources for benefit of tribal communities;
- Activities of the Intra-Departmental Council on Native American Affairs (IDCNAA);
- Activities of the ACF Native American Affairs Workgroup (ACF NAAW);
- Number of tribal communities benefiting from the activities of ANA, IDCNAA, and ACF NAAW;
- Partnerships and collaborative activities outside of ACF and HHS;
- Working relationships established with Congress and other Departments;
- Budget management;
- Staff management; and
- Promotion of Department and Administration priorities with stakeholders.

13. Please describe your philosophy of supervisor/employee relationships. Generally, what supervisory model do you follow? Have any employee complaints been brought against you?

I am a strong believer of "service leadership" and strive to practice service to others over self interest. Raised in my traditional Lakota values of wisdom, bravery, fortitude, and generosity, I was taught to lead by action, with humility, and not merely provide direction. As a supervisor, I aspire to help the staff understand their roles and contributions to the workload, keep morale high, create a comfortable and professional working environment, instill a sense of integrity in the work identified, and lead by example by demonstrating a high work ethic. Additionally, I recognize staff achievement, encourage and support staff to further develop skill sets related to their positions, and support staff in both their professional and personal goals. There have never been any employee complaints brought against me.

14. Describe your working relationship, if any, with the Congress. Does your professional experience include working with committees of Congress? If yes, please explain.

I have a close working relationship with many committees of Congress including the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs (SCIA); the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee; the House Education and Labor Committee; the House Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education Sub-Committee; the House Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Sub-Committee; and the House Interior Appropriations Sub-Committee. My professional experience working with these committees includes strengthening provisions to include Indian students and communities in a number of proposed bills regarding education, workforce investment, early childhood education, and health care; the drafting of key provisions for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act related to support for Native languages, culturally based education, aligned standards and assessments, and teacher support; securing funding for tribal schools and programs; and drafting testimony and appearing as a witness for various authorizing and appropriations committee hearings on education issues.

15. Please explain what you believe to be the proper relationship between yourself, if confirmed, and the Inspector General of your department/agency.

If confirmed as the Commissioner of ANA, I pledge to work closely and cooperatively with the Inspector General of HHS and will provide full disclosure on all information requested for any and all investigations or audits conducted.

16. In the areas under the department/agency's jurisdiction to which you have been nominated,

what legislative action(s) should Congress consider as priorities? Please state your personal views.

Congress should consider the following as priorities for ANA:

- Funding for the Esther Martinez Native Language grants. The Esther Martinez Act preserves and fosters fluency in Native American languages through grants to tribes, tribal organizations, schools, and universities to develop and bolster Native language immersion and revitalization programs. Native language use is rapidly declining and ANA is the only federal agency that provides funding for these vital Native language activities.
- Funding for the Social and Economic Development Strategies (SEDS) projects. Given the current economic state of our nation, and the funding that has been provided to the states through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to spur economic activity, increased funding should be provided to ANA to incentivize tribal governments. Funding for Economic Development projects to foster and develop sustainable projects to support stable and diversified local economies should be prioritized.

17. Within your area of control, will you pledge to develop and implement a system that allocates discretionary spending in an open manner through a set of fair and objective established criteria? If yes, please explain what steps you intend to take and a time frame for their implementation. If not, please explain why.

I pledge to adhere to and implement a system that allocates discretionary spending in an open manner through a set of fair and objective established criteria. ANA currently has an open and fair process with established criteria to review grants that results in approximately 220 projects annually. The grant process for ANA is incredibly competitive, so it is highly critical that ANA maintains the integrity of grant review through the continued utilization of peer panel reviewers. I will work with the Division of Program Operations to evaluate the current review process and criteria, and solicit input from the panel review teams on how to strengthen the current grant application assessment process.

(Nominee is to include this signed affidavit along with answers to the above questions.)

AFFIDAVIT

Lillian A. Sparks being duly sworn, hereby states that he/she has read and signed the foregoing Statement on Biographical and Financial Information and that the information provided therein is, to the best of his/her knowledge, current, accurate, and complete.

Lillian A. Sparks

Signature of Nominee

Subscribed and sworn before me this 13 day of November, 2009.

J. Deanne Becker

Notary Public

MY COMMISSION EXPIRES MAY 31, 2014