



Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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Gregory E. Pyle
Chief

Gary Batton
Assistant Chief

The US Senate Committee on Indian Affairs

RE: Oversight hearing on Programs and Services for Native Americans

Date: May 24th, 2012

Time: 2:15 PM EST

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma encompasses 10 ½ counties and is located in southeastern Oklahoma. It is comprised of over 11,000 square miles of rural area. Oklahoma has one of the highest populations of Native Americans. As an Indian Tribe federally recognized by the U.S. government, the area population is 256,598 (2010 Census), of which 80,000 are certified-by-blood Choctaw Members over 30,000 are of other Native or mixed ancestry. The Choctaw Nation covers the second largest tribal service area in the lower 48 states, second only to the Navaho Nation. The Nation's service area is a remnant of the territory where the Choctaws were forced after their harrowing removal on the Trail of Tears.

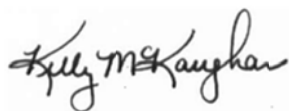
Chief Gregory E. Pyle, Assistant Chief Gary Batton and the Tribal Council have always supported the United States Military worldwide. Indicative of this support, in 2008 the Freedom Award was presented to Chief Pyle. This award publicly recognized employers who have shown exceptional support to employees serving in the National Guard and Reserve.

In 2005 Chief Gregory E. Pyle and the Tribal Council established through Tribal Council Bill CB-163-05, the Choctaw Nation Veteran's Advocacy program. This program was created and funded solely by the Tribe to address the growing need for special support for our veterans and their families. Additionally it provided an internal resource for tribal members within their tribe. Often tribal members do not have the means to travel the long distances required in rural Oklahoma to a VA service center. Unlike many states, Oklahoma does not have county veteran

service representatives. As additional support, the Choctaw Nation created the Choctaw Nation Color Guard and constructed a Veteran's Cemetery for our Choctaw Veterans.

The Choctaw Nation Veteran's Advocacy program provides a multitude of special services, support and assistance. The program since inception has been committed to serving Tribal members worldwide, currently providing services to 2,500 plus clients. The Choctaw Nation Veteran's Advocacy program provides support to include, but not limited to:

- VA Applications to include
 - Grave Markers
 - Disability and Compensation Claims
 - Health Care
 - Widow's Pensions
- Veterans Special Events
 - Plan and host annual Veteran's Day celebration
 - Re-design of Veterans Memorial
 - Plan and organize deployment appreciation events for military Soldier's and families
 - Plan and organize annual Veteran's appreciation dinners at all 17 senior citizen centers within Tribal boundaries
- Referrals
 - Provide referrals to the appropriate governmental agencies
- Care Packages
 - Purchased, processed and sent over 5,000 care packages to troops deployed overseas
 - Provided shipping services for friends and families of deployed service members
 - Provided specialty items, by request, to deployed units and service members
 - Hand held radios
 - Specialty knives
 - Portable sonogram machine



Kelly McKaughan, Director (Lieutenant Colonel)
Veterans Advocacy Program
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma