

Testifying in US Senate, Securing New Funds & Survey Results



Photo with Senate John Tester (D-MT) and Andy Joseph, Vice-Chair of the National Indian Health Board. This marks twice in the Senate & once in front of the HHS Secretary since returning to office in July 2012.

Ahneen, Negee:

I cannot tell you how proud I am to have the honor to serve you as your Chair and carrying on the legacy of leaders like Fred Hatch, Joseph K. Lumsden and George Nolan by testifying in Congress.

At the time I write this, however, there is a effort to undue the treaty permit reduction I instituted. I reduced the fees as I was able to get a new \$455,000

in new federal funds which will cover the entire costs of our Inland program plus add a new \$100,000 for additional staff. Select Board Members have also suggested we tax our Tribal fishers and reduce our deer tag limit even though we harvest an average just 1.7 deer per permit. Why tax and why regulate when there is no issue here?

Our work with Contract Support Costs has paid off with what looks

like a new \$600,000 allocation and a settlement of over \$1 million in past claims. This, of course, was a team effort.

Please remember, when certain Board members harp on what they do not like about me as your elected Chairperson, note that I am delivering the goods despite their efforts.

Chi McGwitch,

Aaron

Testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
Aaron A. Payment, MPA
March 26, 2014

Ahneen, Booze, Biiwaagajiiig Ndznakoz.

Good day, my Name is Aaron Payment, Chairperson of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians; Mid-West Regional VP for the National Congress of American Indians and Vice President of the Mid-West Alliance of Sovereign Tribes. On behalf of NCAI, I'd like to thank you for holding this important hearing.

As Congress considers the FY 2015 budget and beyond, tribal leaders call on Congress to ensure that the promises made to Indian Country are honored in the federal budget. Please remember, just as we do not have the 'discretion' to renege on our millions of acres of land cessation, we ask that you no longer exercise your trust obligation as 'discretionary'. With accumulated impacts of level funding, budget cuts, and sequestration the continued trust obligation of the federal government is threatened. The legacy of this Congress and this Administration is also threatened.

These cuts feel very much like an abrogation of the treaty and trust obligations. This is your duty ~ you are our trustee. Please serve with honor and put the trust in trustee. When people ask ~ why honor such antiquated documents like the treaties? I remind them that they are pursuant to the US Constitution and judicial decisions and the US Constitution is older.

My written testimony calls for equitable funding for tribal governments across the

gional and issue specific tribal organizations, has developed comprehensive recommendations included in the FY 2015 Indian Country Budget Request, and I request for the document

to these losses, we desperately ask for Congress to move our funding from discretionary to non-discretionary and to support "Advance Funding" to further avoid losing ground.

gests the least priority or commitment. We propose to increase the BIA by at least \$139 million, 5.2 percent over 2014 funding levels and \$100 million over the president's request.

higher at 38.6 percent, 2.5 times higher the national rate.

During the 2009-2011 period, the Native employment rate among 25- to 54-year-olds was 64.7 %—13.4 % points lower than the general population. To increase the Native employment rate to that of the White rate would require about 234,000 jobs throughout Indian Country and the United States. For Native people, these statistics show major challenges, but also tremendous opportunity and potential for economic success.

"When people ask ~ why honor such antiquated documents like the treaties? I remind them that they are pursuant to the US Constitution and judicial decisions and the US Constitution is older."

~ Aaron A. Payment

to be entered into the record.

For the remainder of my time, I'd like to hit a few highlight to sound the **clarion call for Equitable Funding for Tribes**. Even with inroads to understanding the trust obligation, Indian Country continues to experience what the US Commission on Civil Rights in 2002, called "a quiet crisis" of federal funding and unmet needs.

Health Care Disparity: The Indian Health Service is currently funded to meet only about 56 percent of our need, despite being the primary provider of health care for many tribal communities. In 2012, IHS per patient expenditures for health services were just \$2,896, compared to \$7,535 per person for health care spending nationally. This is a disparity of nearly a magnitude of nearly three times. For my Tribe, with 66% of my citizens not residing near our health care delivery system, their health needs remain unmet. The response, intended or not ~ to access Medicaid **fails to recognize** the trust obligation. Besides, thousands of tribal citizens live in states where Medicaid expansion did not occur.

We ask that Congress **fully fund Contract Support** and reinstate Sequestration losses. Again, fully funding Contract Support is mandated by a US Supreme Court Case. But, fully funding CSC by cutting other areas appears like a slight of hand or a punishment. We support the President's request for \$251 million to fully fund contract support **but please don't cut** services or IHS infrastructure to do so. Otherwise, we experience a net loss.

To give you an impact view on real people: Life expectancy for AI/AN is 4.1 years less than the rate for the general population. In my family (with one exception) life expectancy is 60 years old. If this was what you had to look forward to, how many years would you have left? 5 years? 10 years?

We support a BIA increase of at least \$33.8 million or 1.4% above FY2014 enacted. With the Congressional mandate to fully fund Contract Support, this may mean cuts to Indian programs and essential BIA infrastructure. After a year of sequester cuts, now making due with sequestration is an impossi-

Education: According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2006) Native Americans have the highest drop-out rate of any racial ethnic group with this trend holding true for nearly all states in the Union. I am a high school dropout in the dissertation phase of my doctorate in Educational Leadership. I am proof that given the right opportunities, my people can accomplish any goal.

Improving educational opportunity is an economic necessity for Indian Country. If half of the 24,700 Native students of the Class of 2010 who dropped out had graduated, they would likely be earning an additional \$147 million each year compared to what they will earn without a high school diploma. Of course, a portion of this income would recirculate into the economy in goods and services.

Increase and forward fund Impact Aid with \$2 billion, up from \$1 billion in 2013. Over 90% of our Indian Children attend public schools. This funding is critical and benefits American Indian student in schools they attend while strengthening the entire school system for the benefit of all. We recommend \$198 million for Title VII funding under NLCB.

Upholding Obligations to Natives Will Expand Economic Opportunity

Nearly one in three Native people—29.1 percent—lived below the federal poverty line in 2012. For Native people living on reservations, the rate is far

Increase Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services funding by \$9 million. Please look to **directly fund tribes** to better address our high rates of alcoholism and increasingly epidemic rates of suicide and accidental deaths due to overdosing on prescription and illegal drugs like heroin. We support renew funding for Circles of Care at \$6 million.

I recommend the use of a seven percent tribal set aside Justice Department funding for base appropriations rather than competitive grants, funding such programs as Crime Victim's Fund, Office on Violence Against Women, Office of Tribal Justice and Community Policing. We anticipate an increased services burden on tribally operated food distribution plans. With cuts to SNAP, we expect the overflow will be felt in Indian Country.

There is much, much more in my written testimony. Thank you again, for your time in hearing our concerns and recommendations for the FY2015 budget. Again, I urge you to put the trust in trustee.

If you 'd like to see the video of the testimony go to:

http://www.indian.senate.gov/hearing/oversight-hearing-receive-testimony-presidents-fiscal-year-2015-budget-tribal-programs

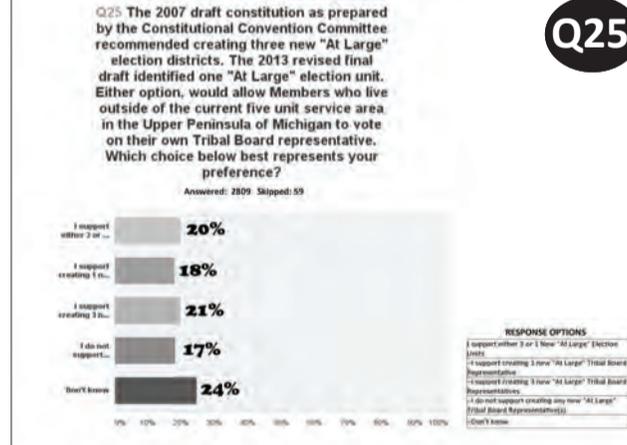
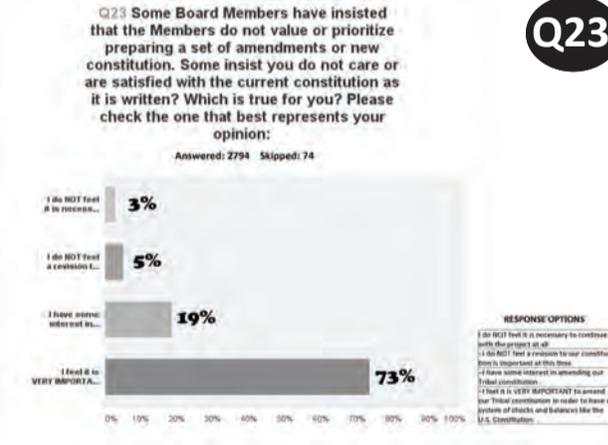
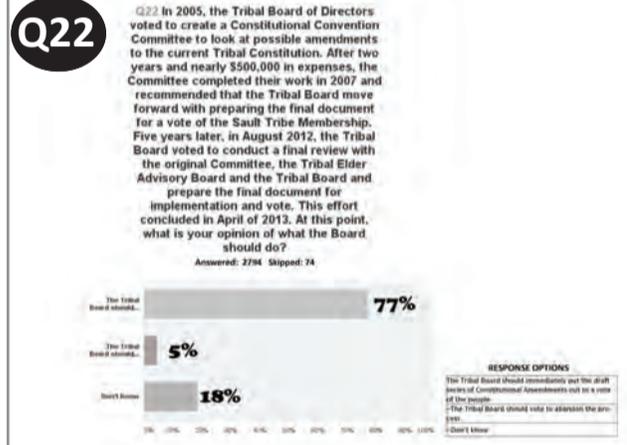
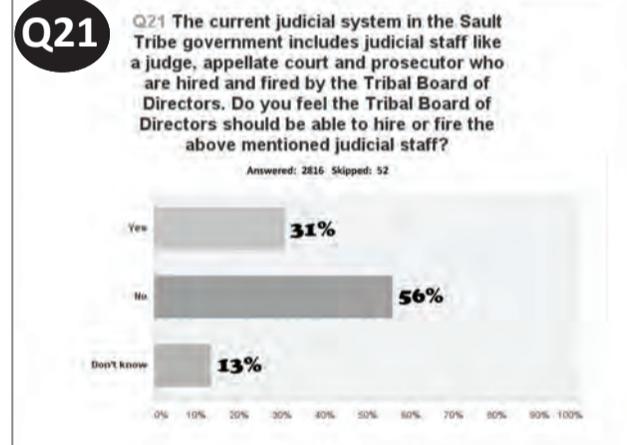
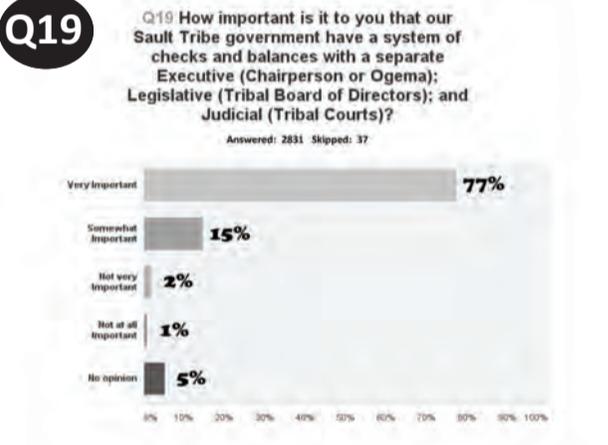
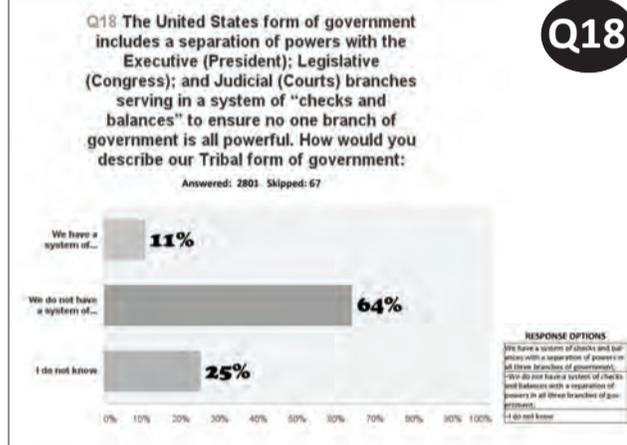
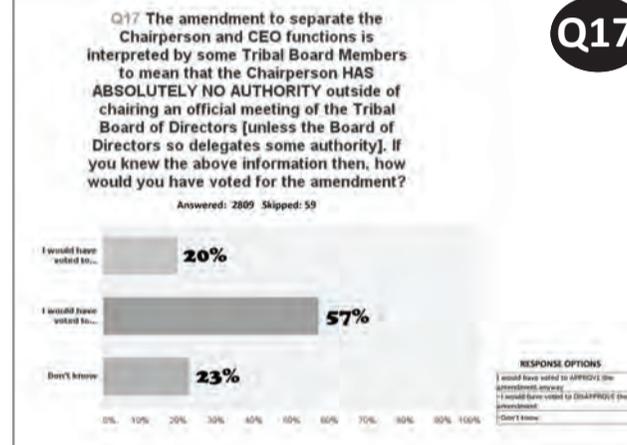
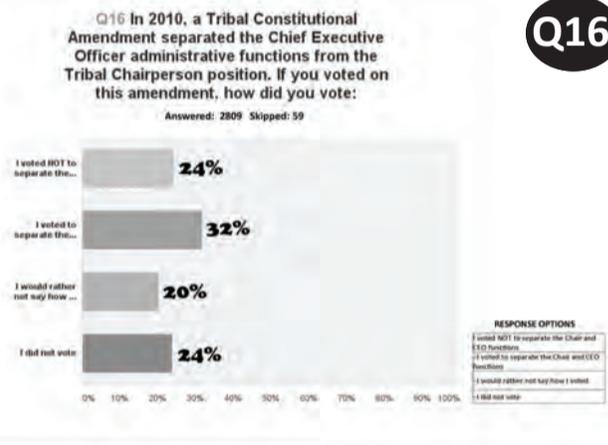
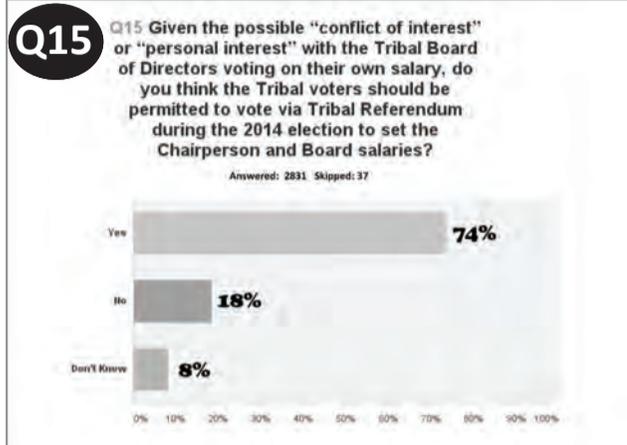
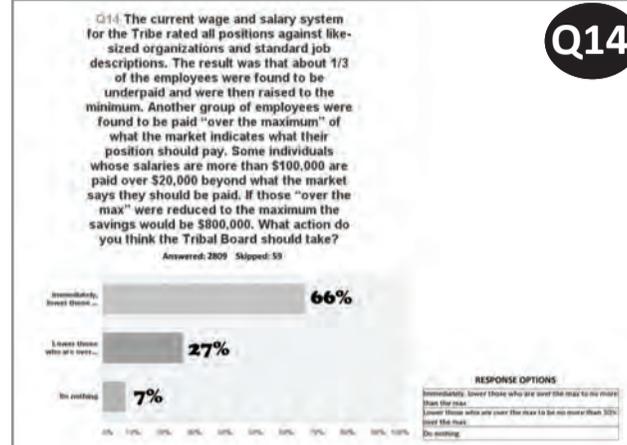
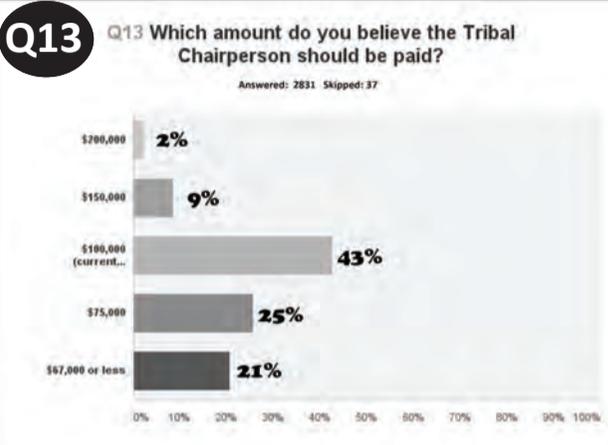
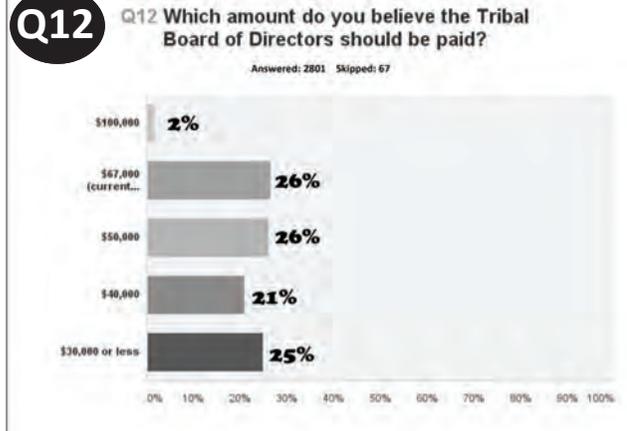
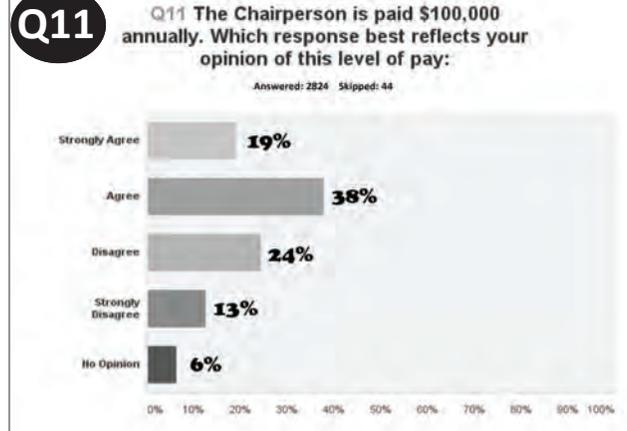
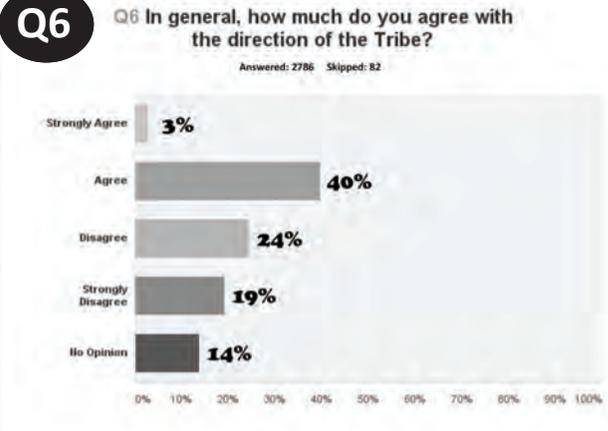
My testimony starts at 1:20 & a response to Senator Tester's question is at 1:34.

"Please serve with honor and put the trust in trustee."

board, and then addresses specific proposals in the Administration's FY 2015 budget, including the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Indian Health Services, natural resources and environment, education, and public safety and justice. NCAI, in collaboration with national, re-

Please restore leftover 2013 IHS funding cuts due to sequestration. With the rural nature of our health care system, so far we lost six medical staff due to the shut down and sequestration. I fear this will be more if *Special Diabetes* is not funded for at least a year. Due

ble burden to place on the BIA. Within Interior budgets, some are projected to increase by 22%. But, the BIA, the only agency in the DOI responsible for direct service to people ~ the original people for which there is a constitutional imperative ~ are the least funded. This sug-



QUESTIONS NOT PUBLISHED

10. Of the following list of elected Sault Tribe Officials, how would you rate their performance?

20. In the upcoming 2014 Tribal Elections, will you vote to re-elect a current Member of the Tribal Board of Directors who OPPOSES allowing you to vote on a new constitution with a separation of powers with an independent Tribal Court and separate Executive and Legislative branches of government?

24. Regarding the Constitutional Amendment project and the up-coming Tribal Board elections, please check the choice that best represents your opinion:

7. What are some of the areas of "the direction" the Tribe is going that you AGREE with?

8. What are some of the areas of "the direction" the Tribe is going that you DISAGREE with?

2014 Members' Preference Survey Results & Analysis

Questions 10, 20 & 24 were not published due to the fact that they would be argued to be election related. If you would like to know the results, please email me at my personal email at aaronpayment@yahoo.com or look on my Facebook page. The last three questions will be posted in the next edition of the *Sault Tribe News*. There are nearly 900 comments to the questions of what Tribal Citizens agree or disagree with regarding our

Tribal direction and what you identified as the major issues facing our Tribe. If you did not complete the survey, you still can. www.surveymonkey.com/s/2014STMemberSurvey

While overall, 43% overall agree with the direction of the Tribe, 43% also disagree [Q6 above]. An overall 56% agree with the current rate of pay of the Chair [Q11] but 72% of Tribal respondents do

not agree with the current Board pay [Q12] and 74% feel we should hold a referendum vote to set the Board and Chair pay [Q15]. Sixty six percent feel the over-the-max issue should be fixed [Q14]. Though 32% voted to amend the Constitution in 2010 to limit the Chair's authority [Q16], a decisive majority of 57% indicate they would not have done so if they knew the Chair was subordinate to the Board [Q17] and faces the constant threat of revoking this authority.

Sixty four percent clearly understand we do not have a separation of powers [Q18] with 77% rating this as very important and another 15% rating it somewhat important for a total of 92% [Q19]. Another 77% feel the Board should immediately put the draft Constitution/ amendments to a vote of the people [Q22].

A separation of powers means not permitting the Board or Chair from being able to fire the Tribal Judge or Prosecutor. Fifty six percent feel this not

should not be allowed [Q21].

Finally, regarding the issue of adding an "At Large" Board Member, only 17% indicated they do not support adding at least one new seat. Even if we add the 24% who checked "Don't Know, the inverse of this number ~ or those who support some form of at large representation is 59% [Q25]. In elections, this is considered nearly a landslide! Members agree that nine years is long enough to wait and wonder why we are waiting.