

Photo by Sherrie Lucus



**Aaron A. Payment, MPA**  
Tribal Chairperson  
"Representing All Members Everywhere"

**Ahneen, Booze, Negee:**

By now, you may have heard that at the October 29th thru 31st Special Meeting of the Tribal Board of Directors, I introduced a resolution to cut the Board and Chairperson pay in half (a savings of about 1/2 million) to preserve Tribal Programs and Services. My rationale was to impress upon the Board the importance of not indiscriminately slashing our programs and services budgets and laying off Tribal employment team members unnecessarily.

The resolution failed but if the Members' poll from last December is any indication of the will of the people, this issue is not dead. Fifty nine percent (59%) of the Members disagree with the Board salary at \$67,000 while 50% said it should be no more than \$40,000. Fifty three (53%) agree with the Chair's salary as is while 26% said it should be higher. I support a 50% cut to the Chair and Board salary.

Upon returning to office last year, I inherited a \$7 million projected budget debt as prepared by the previous Chairperson administration. My first challenge was to pare down projected expenses to balance the budget. My administrative team and I were successful and the Board passed a balanced budget for 2013. This is important to me as every year I have served as Chair, I have underspent what the Board has appropriated. My administration has operated a balanced budget every single year I have been Chair.

Those who used their Board reports to campaign in 2012 ~ **Director Pine** ~ have claimed that we had a reserve of \$70 million when I took office in 2004 and that I put our Tribe in deficit territory. The truth is very different. While we did have a \$70 million reserve, we also had a \$268,000,000 Greek debt personally negotiated by Director Pine's advisor Bernard Bouschor. This was with almost no money down that the Greeks received this generous gift from Bouschor. If you subtract the \$70 million reserve from the \$268 million

# TRIBAL PRIORITIES: \$268,000 BOARD SALARY\* - or - TRIBAL PROGRAMS & SERVICES CUTS?

\* \$67,000 per year times 4 years = \$268,000!

Greek debt, you still end up with \$198 million in debt.

Again, the truth is that I underspent every single year I was Chair. **Politicians are entitled to their own opinions but not their own facts!** Going into 2013, we had a projected balanced budget. However, we were then hit with SEQUESTRATION and a projected federal funding shortfall of \$1.7 million. After weeks of working with my staff, we identified savings to balance the budget. The actual amount cut by the federal government was \$1.3 million. These cuts were extremely difficult and have pushed us to the brink of cutting essential services and jobs.

Our last round of cuts occurred in February. After having met great resistance from some Board Members who simply wanted to make indiscriminate cuts, claiming we had to "live within our means" and "get the chronic users off the dole", I was concerned that another round of cuts might be disastrous. Thus, I scheduled a series of meetings to identify the Board's values and what their priorities were for services and jobs. In preparation for the February sequestration realignment of the budget, we scheduled review sessions for which about half of the Board boycotted to avoiding being bothered with the details. Later, they argued they knew nothing of proposed cuts.

While preparing the FY 2014 budgets, we made two changes to our overall budget that resulted in a projected balanced budget; notwithstanding another round of sequestration cuts. Namely, we relaxed repayment of internal debt and we capped our team member health insurance liability to the maximum exposure realized over the last several years. The one exception was a drastic cut the Board made to our Head Start program with all professional team members furloughed up to one month per year meaning one month cut in their pay. I argued against this but my pleas fell on deaf ears.

With the above changes, however, we had a projected balanced budget with a savings of \$78,000 for the year. Nonetheless, several Board Members have insisted that we cut another 5% of our Tribal Support funds and 5% of Federal funds in case sequestration hits again. The work that I have been doing on the national level shows that IF a federal budget is passed, the proposed amount is under the sequestration trigger which suggests there may

be no sequestration cuts. Still, if a continuing resolution is extended for the year, we will face another 5.2% sequestration cut; about another \$1.7 million cut.

At this point, with a federal continuing resolution to January 15th, a safer amount to cut until they is 2%. Nonetheless, a majority of the Board have continually insisted on a 5% across the board cut without even looking at the FY2014 budgets and the impact. In order to get their attention, I proposed that we share in the pain felt by our people and our dedicated employment team members. The result? Drastic cuts to services were avoided - for now.

One such drastic scheme pushed by some Board Members was to layoff our Special Diabetes Program Initiative team members during the government shut down as we had not received our grant award letter. While Cathy Abramson, Chair of the Na-

tional Indian Health Board and SDPI National Committee Member assured us we would receive funding, and I received the same assurances, Board Members demanded layoffs. We have since returned these folks to work, but not until after the program coordinator resigned.

As you will note in another section of this paper, I have been elected to the National Congress of American Indians Vice President for the Midwest region and as the Vice-President of the United Tribes of Michigan. I also serve as Vice-President of the Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes. These appointments are valuable as they give me an opportunity on a national level to positively impact our funding. I am proud of the fact that I am playing a valuable role at the national level in fighting sequestration, educating Members of Congress of their trust responsibility to our people, and being invited by various organizations to be

a voice for our people on a national level. My November calendar shows the opportunities, for just this month alone.

At the time I write this, my travel reimbursements were DENIED from the Tribal Board budget. I suggested a travel budget for my essential travel to officially represent our interests, but this was met with a negative reactions by Director Pine and others. See below, Director Pine's retaliation

**"You go out and treat us badly, ...AND NOW YOU HAVE THE NERVE TO ASK US FOR MONEY???" Get a grip."**  
~ Director Debra Pine

tory reaction to my request. Thus, I will try to find other means of covering my travel including accepting donations from companies or associations with checks

*Chi McGwitch, Negee,*

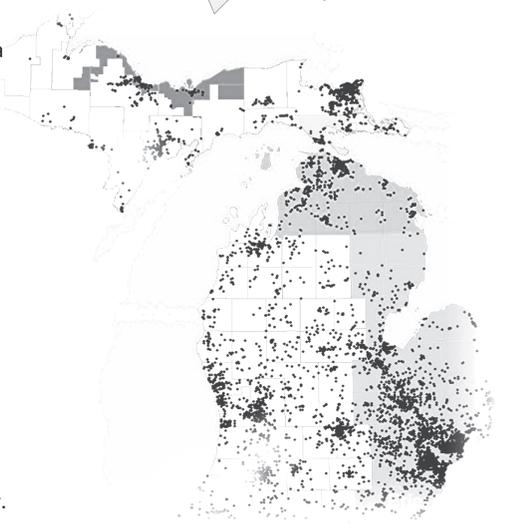
Aaron

2013 SAULT TRIBE Chairperson's CALENDAR					NOVEMBER	
					11-3-13	
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY		
8am-4pm Financial Reviews: Governmental and/or FY2014 Budgets 10am Conference Call 4pm Inland Conservation JKL DAY/ VETERANS DAY	10am Workshop: Legal/Budgets/HR 11am Semi-Annual Reviews 12pm Lunch 1pm Semi-Annual Reviews 3pm TBOD Meeting Agenda Review 5pm Membership Issues 6pm TBOD Meeting - Manistique	8am Signatures 10am-12pm Executive Team 2pm TAP Advisory 12pm Prep Session for Faces of Austerity	8am Signatures 9am In Office 12pm Prep Session for Faces of Austerity	8am Signatures 9am In Office 9:30am-1:00pm Health & Human Services Secretary Tribal Health Advisory Council 1:00pm Drive Home	1	
9am Member Services Monthly 10am Executive Director Monthly 11am CFO Monthly 1pm Law Enforcement/Natural Resources 2pm Legal 3pm Tribal Court 6pm Great Lakes Conservation	9:30am Faces of Austerity - National Press Conference 8am - 1pm NCAI Tribal Leaders Prep Meeting for Summit 1pm - 5pm NCAI Dialogue with Federal Partners - Kevin Washburn, Assistant Secretary BIA - Dr. Yvette Robideaux, HIS Director - Elaine Buckberg, Treasury 6pm - 8pm Tribal Leaders Reception - National Museum of American Indian	8am White House Tribal Nations Summit - Tribal Leaders Meet with President Obama, Break-Out Sessions 2:30 - 4pm Faces of Austerity Congressional Briefing Hart Senate Office Bldg [SH-902]	8:30am Fund Raiser: Congressman Mike Simpson 11:00am-6pm Health & Human Services Secretary Tribal Health Advisory Council	8am Signatures 9am In Office 9am Tax Commission/ Audit Committee 2-5pm Tribe-City of Sault Ste. Marie Meeting [Chair, Secretary, Treasurer] City Offices	2	
8am Signatures 11am Tribal Census Adhoc Group 1pm Legislative/Planning/Appropriations 2pm Ken Ermatinger [Gaming Commission, Enrollment] 3-4:30pm Financial Reviews: Casino & Enterprise	8am JKL Fiduciary 10am Workshop: Legal/Budgets/HR 12pm Lunch 1pm TBOD Prep Session for Next Week	8am Signatures 9am In Office 12pm Sault Schools Superintendent 2pm NMu Guest Speaker	THANKSGIVING	8am Signatures 9am In Office	3	

**SAULT TRIBE MEMBER MEETINGS**

- Wednesday - December 4th**  
12:00pm to 2:00pm, Hessel Tribal Center  
4:00pm to 6:00pm, St. Ignace, McCann School
- Thursday - December 5th**  
12:00pm to 2:00pm, Manistique Tribal Center  
5:00pm to 7:00pm, Escanaba, Willow Creek Plaza
- Friday - December 6th**  
12:00pm to 2:00pm, Marquette Holiday Inn  
3:30pm to 5:30pm, Munising Tribal Center
- Saturday - December 7th**  
12:00pm to 2:00pm, Newberry Tribal Center  
5:00pm to 8:00pm, Kewadin Casino in the Sault
- Wednesday - December 11th**  
4:30pm to 6:30pm, Traverse City, Location:TBA
- Thursday - December 12th**  
7:00pm to 9:00pm Grand Rapids, Location: TBA
- Friday - December 13th**  
12pm to 2:00pm, Okemos, Nokomis Learning Cntr.  
6pm to 8:00pm, Flint, Location: TBA
- Saturday - December 14th**  
10:00am to 1:00pm, Detroit, Location: TBA  
6:00pm to 8:00pm, Cheboygan, Location: TBA

*Join us. Come and Have your Say!*



Please visit the Sault Tribe Website for locations, and any changes.  
<http://www.saulttribe.com/>