

# SERVICE ORIENTATION IS A GOOD THING!

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

*Ahneen, Booze, Negee:*

I make no apologies for my service orientation as a Tribal leader. In fact, I am proud of it. When I started college back in 1983, I first studied to be a social worker. I did so because I recognize the value of helpers who provided me with opportunities. Programs like Head Start, Indian Education, Johnson O'Malley, Upward Bound, Food Stamps, USDA Commods, welfare, and the good charity of churches and organizations like the Salvation Army; all helped shape who I am. This is also why I give back.

All Americans benefit from such programs and governmental services like roads, infrastructure and other safety net programs. In the 1960's, this community spirit permeated the Kennedy & Johnson administrations with the culmination of the *Great Society* programs and the establishment of Medicare were enacted to equalize the disparities for those who did not share in the American Dream. Today, these safety net programs are not only under attack, so is the very fabric of America's governmental stability. Additionally, those programs with an American Indian focus are not charity,



**Sitting in former Attorney General Bobby Kennedy's Office while visiting the U.S.**

welfare, or reparations; they are pre-paid treaty rights we paid for with the blood, sweat and tears of our ancestors ~ and millions of acres of land that were ceded.

Sadly, this same change in orientation seems to have made it's way into our Tribal government with nearly half of our Board Members insisting that we deal with the "chronic users" on the dole and "live within their means!" The interesting thing with this perspective is that the Tribal Board sets the eligibility. If the most disadvantage of our people meet eligibility, then how can they be relegated to abusers or deadbeats on welfare? This new orientation

is just hateful. I cannot imagine this is what our founders intended. Whether you believe our *Anishinabe Biimaadziwin* teachings or you follow the *Good Samaritan* teachings and charity and love teachings of *Christ*, I am proud to say I believe all of the above and that I will fight to protect our safety net programs.

### MY EFFORTS TO PROTECT OUR TRIBE

Here are just some of the highlights of my most recent trip to DC and efforts to protect our Tribe from sequester and now a government shut down which has cut off all Federal funding.

9/11 - Attended the National Congress of American Indians Impact Session at the Capitol and urged U.S. Senators & Reps. To exempt tribes from sequester due to treaty obligations. Urged other Tribal Leaders to get actively engaged and shared our booklet as a template.

9/12 - Attended a fundraiser for Congressman Mike Simpson (R) who pledged to try to protect our funding. After the Government Shut down, he sponsored legislation to fund Tribal programs despite the shut down.

Meeting with legislative staff from Congressman Dave Camp's Office (R) to share the impact of sequestration on our programs.

Met with Legislative Director and Counsel for U.S. Senator and Chairwoman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee Maria Cantwell regarding sequestration and a Congressional Budget Office memo possibly avoiding sequestration for FY2014.

9/13 - Was asked by NCAI to attend a meeting at the Office of Management and Budget with 5 other Tribal leaders to advocate for our funding. I was honored to participate.

U.S. Department of Justice visit to present our Tribal Flag for their hall of tribal flags. Met Tribal Member Nichole Hannah who works at DOJ and holds a law degree and is in the dissertation phase for her doctorate. Nichole is Lisa Dietz's daughter. Proud of you Nichole!

While at the U.S. Department of

Justice, they asked if I would record a training video on cooperation between Tribes and the U.S. DOJ. Again, I was honored to do so.

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I also did a national interview at the American Dental Association Headquarters on the impacts of sequestration on Tribal health programs.

9/14 - Met with Members (see picture below) just outside of DC at Member Stacy Bohlen's house.



Stacy is the Executive Director of the National Indian Health Board. Cathy Abramson is the Chairperson of this body. Thank you to Stacy for being a wonderful host and great chili maker!

9/15 - Drafted legislative impact letters and position papers for Members to send to Congress. Please visit the Tribal website to download a letter to sign and mail.

9/16 - Cathy Abramson, Angeline Bouley, Assistant Executive Director and I met with our line Officer for Head Start WJ Strickland and the National Head Start director to see what other tribes have done to survive sequester. **I am embarrassed that we are one of only a few casino tribes who did not find fund-**

ing to fully operate. The National Director and our line officer noted that Anne Suggitt, our Head Start director is one of the best in the country! Sadly, our Board furloughed Anne and others staff for one month without pay.

Attended with Cathy Abramson as the NIHB Chair, a strategy session at the NIHB headquarters in DC. I am extremely impressed with their team!

9/17 & 18 - Represent Tribes across the country on the Health and Human Services Secretary Advisory Council. I was proud to speak to upholding the treaty obligations for "health, education, and social welfare" and how sequestration feels like an abrogation of our treaty rights. I also got to share an NIHB analysis which shows that Indian Health Service funding should be exempt from sequestration.

9/23 - Visited by Patrick Miles, U.S. Attorney for the Western District. Our team and I discussed cooperative efforts and the need to stop sequestration. Met Hannah Bobee, who was recently hired to work in the U.S. Attorney's office.

9/30 - Invited by a National Radio program (*Native America Calling*) to be a guest speaker on the impact of sequestration on Indian Tribes.

9/30 - Dialed in to the Whitehouse session to explain the protocols for the U.S. Government shut-down. The impact on Indian programs is devastating.

10/14 - Participated in a National IHS Update with the Director of

IHS.

In addition to these efforts, we are working to identify a funding triage approach to operate until the government re-opens. Hopefully, we will be reimbursed. I also hope this information was helpful. Stay tuned and please call your Member of Congress to request they uphold our treaty obligations.

*Chi McGwitch, Negee,*

### *Celebrating a Sault Tribe Hero: Robin Smith*



For her work to bring attention to the need to end bullying. Last month, Robin coordinated a hugely successful Walk & Rock event to raise funds and awareness! Above I show my support by donated \$1,000 toward this cause. To find out more, please call my office 906-635-6050.



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September 27, 2013

Aaron Payment  
 Chairman  
 Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians  
 523 Ashmun Street  
 Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783

Dear Chairmen Payment,

Thank you for coming to the September 19<sup>th</sup> briefing on sequestration's impact throughout Indian Country. It is so important for Members and our staff to hear the message you have powerfully spoken about during your visits to the Hill. Funding for tribal nations isn't about handouts or special treatment; it's a trust thing!

The federal government must do more to honor our trust and treaty obligations, and Congress has a responsibility to repeal and replace the sequestration cuts that undermine those commitments. Thank you again for sharing your experiences and building awareness, and please let me know how my office or the Native American Caucus can help amplify the voices of our nation's tribal leaders.

Sincerely,

Betty McCollum  
 Member of Congress



Congresswoman Betty McCollum, Co-Chair of the Native American Caucus picture with Retired Congressman Dale Kildee.