

Highlights of NCAI activity at winter session



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I had the honor last month of representing our tribe again as the voting member at the winter session of the National Congress

of American Indians (NCAI) in Washington, D.C. The tribal board has sent me as a representative to all NCAI events for the last six years. NCAI is a gathering of tribes from the entire United States and its main focus is to work together as a single voice, to get our thoughts and suggestions heard at the federal level. The organization started small many years ago but has become a powerhouse in Washington, D.C. The winter session contains many listening sessions and several speakers throughout the four days. After the general sessions members are allowed to pick from many breakout meetings that range from health care to trust responsibility to homeland security to nutrition.

This winter session had a

great lineup of the president's cabinet members. Secretary Shaun Donovan of Housing and Urban Development outlined many of the upcoming programs and grants that will be available this coming year. He also relayed that in cabinet meetings with President Obama, the president has stated that he is not going to balance the U.S. budget on the back of Native Americans. The secretary went on to say in the new budget many programs have been slashed and reduced but the Native American budgets have at least maintained the current amounts and some have seen increases. We heard from the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Homeland Security. One of the secretaries even joked that at a cabinet meet-

ing that morning the president had said that most of the cabinet was at NCAI conference and he should just hold his meetings over there, but that did not happen.

Notable other speakers were Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, House leader from California, Senator Mark Begich from Alaska, Congressman Xavier Becerra from California, Congresswoman Betty McCollum from Minnesota and many others. They all spoke of support and the growing understanding of our needs and of their obligations to uphold the treaties made by their predecessor. This is very important because a great amount of my time as a leader of our tribe is dedicated to educating politicians in D.C. on who we are, what our sovereign rights are and

why they have to help our people.

Last week, I wrote a unit report on the lands claims monies and how the elder dividend is computed. I thank everyone who contacted me following that article and I appreciate the positive responses. I would like to state here that I have heard also some comments, not directly relayed to me, that some of the information was inaccurate or wrong. I stand by what was printed, and to further prove that point is that before my unit report was printed, I had both the tribe's legal and financial department go over it and correct any errors or omissions.

Thank you,
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