

105TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 100

Expressing the sense of the Senate that the Federal commitment for the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives should be affirmed through legislative actions of the 105th Congress to bring the quality of Indian education and educational facilities up to parity with the rest of America.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 17, 1997

Mr. DOMENICI (for himself, Mr. CAMPBELL, Mr. INOUE, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. DORGAN, and Mr. WELLSTONE) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Senate that the Federal commitment for the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives should be affirmed through legislative actions of the 105th Congress to bring the quality of Indian education and educational facilities up to parity with the rest of America.

Whereas there exists a unique legal and political relationship between the United States and tribal governments and a unique Federal responsibility to American Indians and Alaska Natives;

Whereas, under law and practice, the United States has undertaken a trust responsibility to protect and preserve Indian tribes, Indians, and tribal assets and resources;

Whereas the Federal Government's commitment to Indian education has been recognized, reinforced, and carried out through most treaties with Indian tribes, Congressional legislation, numerous court decisions and Presidential executive orders;

Whereas this Federal responsibility includes working with tribal governments and their members to improve the education of tribal members;

Whereas the 1990 census shows the poverty rate for American Indians and Alaska Natives was nearly twice the national average—31 percent of Indians live below the poverty level, compared to 13 percent of the total population. Nearly 38 percent of Indian children above the age of 5 were living below the poverty level in 1990, compared with 11 percent of non-minority children;

Whereas the development of tribal economies is dependent on physical infrastructure, capital investment, and highly developed human capital and an educated labor force;

Whereas excellence in educational facilities and services is a key to building the skills necessary for Indian people to develop vibrant tribal economies;

Whereas ever-increasing regional, national, and international economic competition demands that Indians have every competitive advantage accruing from achieving excellence in education;

Whereas there are approximately 600,000 American Indian and Alaska Native children attending schools in this country. An estimated 87 percent of these children attend

public schools located on or near reservations and in urban areas; another 10 percent attend schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and an estimated 3 percent attend private schools;

Whereas these schools have experienced an increase in student population of 3–4 percent in the past 5 years, however, annual funding for the education of Indian children has not increased proportionately;

Whereas United States census data shows that the Indian and Alaska Native population has increased significantly in the past three decades. Primary growth concentrations are at ages 5 through 19;

Whereas the 1994 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) showed over 50 percent of American Indian fourth graders scored below the basic level in reading proficiency, compared with 42 percent of all students;

Whereas American Indian students have the highest dropout rate of any racial ethnic group (36 percent) and the lowest high school completion and college attendance rates of any minority group. As of 1990, only 66 percent of American Indians aged 25 years or older were high school graduates, compared to 78 percent of the general population;

Whereas the demonstrated need for improvements to Indian schools and colleges is acute as reflected in the great disparity between average annual college funding per student of \$2,900 for Indian students, and \$6,200 for non-Indians in America, and the Federal Government should assist in bringing the Indian schools and colleges up to parity with the rest of America;

Whereas tribal scholarship programs nationally are only able to serve an estimated 40 percent of the eligible college student population and funding for graduate scholarships has been cut in half in the past 2 years;

Whereas there is a major backlog of \$680 million in funding need for facilities constructions, maintenance and repair for the 185 BIA-funded schools as well as for public schools located on and near Indian reservations;

Whereas there exists an alarming decline in the use of Native languages indigenous to the United States. A 1969 Senate Committee report stated that in 1969 there were 300 separate languages still being spoken. In 1996, the number had dropped to 206 still being spoken. These languages are spoken nowhere else in the world; and

Whereas, despite these alarming statistics, funding for the education of American Indian and Alaska Native students has been reduced substantially in the past 3 years. The United States Congress in fiscal year 1996 eliminated discretionary education programs in the Office of Indian Education budget which had funded adult education, research and demonstration programs, the Indian Fellowship Program and teacher training and professional development projects. At the same time, funding for reservation-based education programs in the BIA budget was reduced by more than \$100 million in the fiscal year 1996 budget: Now, therefore, be it

- 1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the United States
 2 Senate—
 3 (1) that the Senate recognizes and supports the
 4 Federal Government's legal and moral commitment
 5 to the education of American Indian and Alaska Na-

1 tive children, which is a part of treaties, Executive
2 orders, court decisions and public laws which have
3 been enacted by the House and Senate of the United
4 States Government;

5 (2) that funding for all bills, including reau-
6 thorizing legislation in the 105th Congress with spe-
7 cific programs for American Indians and Alaska Na-
8 tives be funded at levels sufficient to meet the ever-
9 increasing educational and economic demands facing
10 Indian people on reservations, urban communities
11 and Alaska Native villages;

12 (3) that the Senate recognizes the adult literacy
13 needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives
14 through the inclusion of tribal provisions in the ad-
15 ministration's proposal to reauthorize the Adult
16 Education Act;

17 (4) that the administration's bill for reauthor-
18 ization of the Higher Education Act of 1965, Public
19 Law 102-325, preserve the original purpose and in-
20 tent of the Tribally-Controlled Community Colleges
21 Act and promote access to higher education opportu-
22 nities for American Indians and Alaska Natives;

23 (5) that during the 105th Congress' reauthor-
24 ization of agricultural research programs, the needs
25 of tribal colleges as designated land-grant institu-

1 tions must be given close attention, through amend-
2 ments to the Educational Equity in Land-Grant Sta-
3 tus Act of 1994;

4 (6) that early childhood programs such as Head
5 Start (Public Law 103–252) and Healthy Start con-
6 tain resources needed to meet a growing number of
7 American Indian and Alaska Native children whose
8 rate of growth exceeds the national average; and

9 (7) that the Senate recognizes the need for de-
10 velopment and implementation of a Government-
11 wide policy on Indian education which addresses the
12 needs of American Indian and Alaska Native people.

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