

Statement of Ben Nighthorse Campbell
Chairman – Committee on Indian Affairs
Hearing On H.R. 1833, Tribal Self Governance Amendments

October 7, 1998

I am pleased the Committee will receive testimony on H.R. 1833, legislation to make permanent the tribal Self Governance Demonstration program within the Department of Health and Human Services. As you know, this bill was passed by the House on October 5, 1998.

In addition to making the demonstration project permanent, H.R. 1833 would take the next step in Self Governance and establish a Demonstration Project for other, non-IHS programs within the HHS.

In 1970, President Nixon delivered his "Message to Congress" laying the groundwork for what has become one of the most successful initiatives involving Indian tribes to date --- the Indian Self Determination program.

Grounded in the government-government relationship, Self Governance allows tribes to administer federal programs and services provided by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health Service, and has resulted in higher quality services, more skilled tribal personnel, and political and economic self determination among tribes.

The litany of statistics showing the poor state of health care in Indian country is well known: diabetes, cancer, alcoholism and drug abuse is rampant in America's native communities. Together with S.1770, legislation to elevate the position of the IHS director to Assistant Secretary for Health and Human Services, I am hopeful H.R. 1833 will pave the way for improved health conditions for Indian people nationwide.

Some in the Administration and in Congress have expressed concerns with this bill. As many here today know, there is a growing deficit in Contract Support Cost dollars for tribal contractors. There are proposals to address the issue including a moratorium on new contracts. While I am opposed to an outright moratorium, it is no secret that without stronger commitments from this Administration, bills like H.R. 1833 and the Self Governance program itself will come under increased pressure and scrutiny.

I am confident that other contentious issues such as defining an "inherently federal function" can be resolved and the bill can move forward. With that, let me thank the witnesses

who have come a long way to testify here today.