

Statement of Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell
Chairman – U.S. Committee on Indian Affairs
Hearing on the FY2005 Budget Request for Indian Programs

Wednesday, February 25, 2004 – 9:30 a.m.

The Committee will come to order.

Good morning and welcome to the Second hearing on the Fiscal Year Budget Request for Indian Programs submitted on February 2nd by President Bush as part of the larger Request.

This morning the Committee will hear from 6 Federal agencies with responsibility for various Indian programs and services.

The Request includes a total of \$10.8 billion for the Interior Department with modest increases proposed for Indian law enforcement, fire management, and others.

Major increases are proposed for the Office of Special Trustee and related trust activities.

Modest increases are proposed in the Indian health and other accounts and rather than go through the list of increases and decreases, I will submit a detailed statement for the Record.

I want to make one comment for those that could not attend the NCAI Meeting.

Late last week we witnessed a major breakthrough in the *Cobell v Norton* case as the Plaintiffs and the Defendants agreed to move to the stage of meeting with and selecting mediators to resolve the case.

This event is a big deal and I believe if the Indian account holders are going to benefit, its going to come about from a negotiated settlement and not from 8 more years of litigation.

With that, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses this morning.

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