

Barack Obama

June 28, 2007

Dear Tribal Leader,

Since announcing my candidacy for president, I have been looking forward to the opportunity to express my strong support for tribal nations.

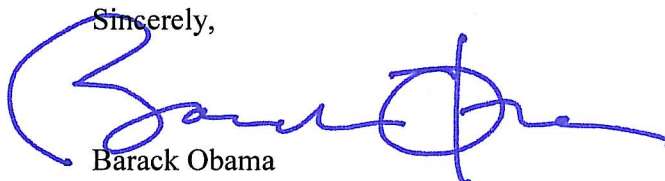
Tribal communities face a unique set of challenges, yet the federal government has historically neglected its responsibilities to them in areas such as sovereignty, health care, and education. Past administrations have talked about government-to-government relationships and tribal consultation, but they have rarely followed through. Because of underfunding and jurisdictional conflicts, tribes are unable to protect women from non-Indian abusers or shield their communities from the recent scourge of methamphetamine. The state of Nevada has gone without a single Indian Health Services (IHS) hospital since 1985, and federal per-capita spending for Indian health care amounts to about half of federal per-capita spending for prisoners' health care. Such gestures do not bespeak a commitment to tribal nation-building.

I am committed to honoring the federal government's obligations to the First Americans and strengthening the federal government's unique relationship with tribal nations. Recognizing the inherent sovereignty of tribes is not enough; we must also help build tribal nations through adequate funding of programs. I am proud to be an original co-sponsor of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act of 2007. This long-overdue legislation will modernize Indian health care services and delivery, make it easier for Tribes and the IHS to attract quality health care professionals, and provide tribal health programs with more flexibility to ensure that funds are used to meet the specific needs of their communities.

My experience as a community organizer in some of Chicago's poorest neighborhoods taught me that there is no simple way to heal ills that often have complex causes. My comprehensive approach invests in physical, human and institutional infrastructure; increases access to capital and removes barriers to development; promotes education from the pre-school to the university level, including Native language immersion and preservation programs; and above all, develops authentic government-to-government relationships between the federal government and Indian tribes.

Included in this mailing you will find my foundational policy for First Americans. I will continue to build upon these ideas as I meet with tribal communities and leaders throughout the country. I hope you will join in these meetings and check www.BarackObama.com for the First Americans for Obama webpage and further policy updates. Please feel free to contact my Indian policy and outreach team by phone at (866) 695-2008 or by email at firstamericans@barackobama.com. Only with the benefit of your ideas will we usher in a new era of federal Indian policy – an era of tribal nation-building when tribes, not bureaucrats, determine how to best govern themselves.

Sincerely,



Barack Obama



Obama for America • PO Box 8210 • Chicago, IL 60680

Paid for by Obama for America