



Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida

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NEWS RELEASE

TRIBAL LEADERS MEET TO ADDRESS TAX CONCERNS CALL ON TREASURY DEPARTMENT TO FAIRLY IMPLEMENT NEW LEGISLATION INTENDED TO PROTECT TRIBAL BENEFITS FROM TAXATION

MICCOSUKEE TRIBE TERRITORY, FLORIDA – Today leaders from over a dozen Indian nations and tribes from throughout the United States met to discuss efforts by the U.S. Treasury Department to implement the Tribal General Welfare Exclusion Act (“GWE” Act), which was enacted unanimously by the Congress and signed in to law by President Obama in September. The GWE Act protects from income taxation the benefits that Indian tribal governments provide to their citizens, creates a Tribal Advisory Committee to advise the Treasury Department on tax issues, and suspends all audits of tribal governments pending the training of IRS agents on issues of Indian treaty rights and tribal sovereignty.

In October, Treasury officials responsible for implementing the GWE Act revealed that the Tribal Advisory Committee was being developed without input from tribal leaders, that burdensome federal regulations would apply to appointments to the Committee, and that appointees to the Committee might not be tribal leaders. Tribal leaders have expressed concern that the Treasury Department and IRS are seeking to undermine the purposes of the GWE Act through the administrative process.

“The Congress enacted the GWE Act to protect Indian people from continued harassment by the IRS. For years we have had to deal with IRS auditing threats simply because we provide benefits to improve the quality of life of our people,” said Colley Billie, Chairman of the Miccosukee Tribe.

Jonathan Yellowbird Steele, President of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, said, “Our Sioux Nation has treaties with the United States, and we call upon the President and Congress to honor our treaties. We thank Senators Johnson and Thune, Heitkamp and Hoeven, Moran and Tester, and Congressmen Nunes, Kind, and Noem, and so many others, for standing up for us and honoring the United States’ original promises. The U.S. Constitution says its purpose is to Promote the General Welfare of We the People. Well, that’s the purpose of the treaties, promote the general welfare of We the Native People.”

Maurice “Moe” John, President of the Seneca Nation of Indians stated that: "The Seneca Nation thanks Congress for passing a law that respects and protects tribal sovereignty. We thank all the tribal nations for their efforts in getting this law enacted. Now, we need to stand together to make sure this law is properly implemented."

Nathan Small, Chairman of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe stated: "We thank Rep. Nunes, Rep. Kind, Senator Moran, and Senator Heitkamp on their successful efforts to enact the Tribal General Welfare Exclusion Act to protect tribal inherent sovereignty and the joint letter they sent to Treasury Secretary Lew today urging Treasury to implement the law as they intended as the primary sponsors of the Act. We are hopeful that Treasury will work with us as partners, not adversaries, on this critical matter."

Robert Shepherd, Chairman of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate stated that “We thank the Congress and the sponsors of the GWE Act to help Indian people. We now must ensure that the Treasury Department fulfills Congressional intent in creating the Tribal Advisory Committee. Tribal Nations know their peoples needs more than anyone else, so it is only common sense that Tribal Leaders be involved in the Tribal Advisory Committee.”

Henry Cagey, Council Member and former Chairman of the Lummi Nation stated: "Working together, we have proven that Indian Country is strong enough to work with Congress to enact legislation for our benefit. Now, we must ensure that the GWE Act is fully and fairly implemented by the Treasury Department so we can protect Indian people from unjust taxation and confiscation of tribal wealth."

Tony Ptacek, CFO, St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin, stated that "Implementing H.R.3043 as intended is absolutely critical to ALL Tribal Governments throughout our Great Nation - The United States of America."

"We are grateful for the new GWE law," said Cherokee Nation Treasurer Lacey Horn. "We hope tribal leaders will be involved in the law's implementation, as it directly affects our ability to positively impact the lives of our citizens."

"The 184 member tribes of NIGA fought hard for the passage of this important legislation," stated NIGA Treasurer Andy Ebona (Douglas Village, Tlingit Tribe). "On behalf of Chairman Stevens and the NIGA Board, we are committed to ensuring the IRS carries out the intent of Congress and respects Tribal Sovereignty and Tribal Government welfare programs. After all, the final goal of this legislation is to ensure a better quality of life, and improving economic opportunities, for all of our Tribal citizens."

The tribal leaders in attendance at the meeting discussed future action steps, holding meetings with federal officials, and agreed to establish the Tribal Leaders Tax Reform Alliance to focus future advocacy efforts.