SUPPORT OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE PROVISIONS IN THE HEALTH CARE REFORM LEGISLATION

WHEREAS, United South and Eastern Tribes Incorporated (USET) is an intertribal organization comprised of twenty-five (25) federally recognized Tribes; and

WHEREAS, the actions taken by the USET Board of Directors officially represent the intentions of each member Tribe, as the Board of Directors comprises delegates from the member Tribes’ leadership; and

WHEREAS, the USET members of the Board of Directors are working for the best interest of their Tribal Governments, and their members, to protect, promote, and enhance opportunities for their people; and

WHEREAS, USET member Tribes have always maintained that a government-to-government relationship exists between the Federal Government and federally recognized Indian Tribes; and

WHEREAS, this unique relationship requires the Administration to consult with Indian Tribes on any policy and/or legislative matters that impact or may potentially impact Tribal communities, including health care reform policies and legislation; and

WHEREAS, health care reform continues to command high level attention with the Obama Administration and Congress; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative that Indian Country be proactive and involved in the development of any health care reform legislation and have a seat at the table in the advancement of any reform efforts; and

WHEREAS, it is vital that the Obama Administration and the Congress assure all health care reform proposals acknowledge and reflect the Federal Government’s trust responsibility to provide health care to American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/AN), as expressly recognized in Federal law and policy; and

WHEREAS, health care reform proposals must assure the unique Indian health care system created by the Federal government to carry out its trust responsibility is not adversely impacted, and, indeed, is strengthened and enhanced by reform efforts; and

WHEREAS, the following principles are provided as essential recommendations to the Administration and Congress to include in health reform legislation so it reaches AI/AN people:

1) Exemption of AI/AN from any financial penalty;

2) Tribal Governments to be held on parity with State Governments in regards to financial penalties;

3) Eligibility of AI/AN in any insurance subsidies programs;

4) Prohibit cost-sharing (including premiums, deductibles, copayments, co-insurance, etc.) for AI/ANs;

5) Protection for Indian health providers to receive payments for the services they provide for Indian people to use Indian health providers without penalty;

6) Exclusion of tribally provided health benefits as taxable income;

7) The reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act; and
8) The extension of the Federal Tort Claims Act authority to cover the Indian health system when providing services to non-Indians; and

9) Ensure Tribal Governments have access to the “Exchange” allowing Tribes to purchase insurance at competitive prices.

WHEREAS, Indian Tribes, as sovereign governments, must be granted maximum decision-making options in health care reform legislation; therefore; be it

RESOLVED the USET Board of Directors supports the Obama Administration and Congress’ fundamental concept that a comprehensive stable and affordable health care system is essential to restore all Americans to a healthy status; and, be it further

RESOLVED the USET Board of Directors urges the Obama Administration and Congress to support and include the aforementioned principles in any health insurance reform bill that is passed; and, be it further

RESOLVED with the inclusion of the aforementioned principles, USET supports the President’s goal of health care reform.

CERTIFICATION

This resolution was duly passed at the USET Annual Meeting, at which a quorum was present, in Hollywood, FL, on Thursday, October 29, 2009.

Brian Patterson, President
United South and Eastern Tribe, Inc.

Robert McGhee, Secretary
United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

“Because there is strength in Unity”