United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. Statement on the Passing of former Seminole Tribe of Florida Chairman and USET President Howard E. Tommie

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USET President Kirk Francis has issued the following statement observing the passing of former Seminole Tribe of Florida Chairman and former USET President Howard E. Tommie.

The USET member Tribal Nations are saddened by the recent passing of a treasured Indian Country leader, former Seminole Tribe of Florida Chairman and USET President Howard E. Tommie. On behalf of the entire USET family, our hearts, blessings and prayers go out to his family, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and his many, many friends. Chairman Tommie will be remembered by the USET family for his work and leadership as our President during the formative years of the organization. Not only were his efforts during this time instrumental in USET's development, but also for other Tribal Nations across the country as they worked to nation-rebuild. As USET President, Chairman Tommie worked to encourage and empower Tribal Nations to build their capacity in order to rebuild their economies and exercise their inherent sovereignty to the fullest extent.

USET President Kirk Francis stated, “We appreciate the great contributions Chairman Tommie has made to improve the standard of living of Tribal Nation citizens across Indian Country. Our young Tribal leaders should study and grow from his examples of working to empower Tribal Nations. The legacy of Howard Tommie shall live on in our hearts and lives and while we are saddened by the news of his passing, we know that we will draw strength from his leadership and continue to build upon his legacy as he makes the journey into the spirit world. On behalf of the entire USET family, we extend our condolences and love to his family and express our gratitude for sharing him with us throughout the years.”

Several resources and initiatives resulted from the leadership and legacy of Chairman Tommie. During his time as a member of the Board of Directors, the USET headquarters were moved to the present location in Nashville, where the organization has grown to become a very powerful regional organization that has a great national influence. Chairman Tommie was also instrumental in effecting the organization's membership growth with the addition of the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana, the Seneca Nation of Indians, and the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana. Recognizing the contributions Chairman Tommie has made to Tribal Nations throughout Indian Country, Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana Vice Chairman David Sickey released a statement on behalf of the Tribe stating, “The Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana sends our sincerest and deepest sympathy to the family and Tribe of Howard Tommie, the Former Seminole Tribal Chairman. No words can describe the loss a Tribe experiences in the passing of our Elders. Chairman Tommie, like many of our First American men and women, dedicated his life to serving this great country, as well as, fiercely progressing his Tribe towards independence. May all of us join together in the comfort of knowing that Chairman Tommie is now resting in the arms of our Lord.”

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