

DOI SELF-GOVERNANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

c/o Self-Governance Communication and Education

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February 14, 2014

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall, II
Ranking Minority Member
House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2307 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Self-Governance Program within the Department of Transportation

Dear Mr. Rahall:

On behalf of Self-Governance Tribes nationwide, we write to express our appreciation of your leadership to address transportation needs in Indian Country. During the last efforts by Congress to reauthorize the surface transportation act, your introduction of legislation to establish the Tribal Transportation Self-Governance Program moved the debate in a direction that Tribal Self-Governance leaders have been urging the Congress to take for many years. Extending the Self-Governance Program to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) would provide Tribal governments with the flexibility they need to enhance transportation access, improve transportation system reliability and promote transportation safety. This legislation will streamline the process and eliminate the unnecessary bureaucracy by reducing the role of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in the process. Therefore, we respectfully ask that you re-introduce this legislation in the upcoming reauthorization of MAP-21.

Self-Governance is a pragmatic and proven approach. More than 260 Tribes participate in the Self-Governance Program within the Department of the Interior's Indian Affairs (DOI-IA) and nearly 340 Tribes are carrying out health programs through compacts with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in the Indian Health Service (IHS). Experience with these agencies has proven that when Tribes directly administer federal program funds, those programs are more accountable to local priorities and result in the delivery of high quality, cost-effective services to Indian communities.

Tribes administering federal transportation programs have demonstrated that they are best able to use federal funds to maximize the impact of infrastructure and safety improvements, stimulate local economic development and create jobs in communities where such activities are urgently needed. This legislation will increase efficiency and effectiveness of limited transportation funds and build upon and expand these positive results. Congressional passage of your legislation extending Self-Governance to the DOT is vital.

Congress has already authorized Tribes to assume greater authority for road construction and maintenance as well as transit and highway safety programs. However, without the overarching administrative and regulatory framework that your Self-Governance legislation would provide, Tribes will continue to be burdened with the negotiation and administration of funding agreements, grant conditions and reporting requirements that are inconsistent among the various modal administrations within the DOT. Your proposed legislation extending Self-Governance to DOT would reduce these regulatory burdens and streamline procedures by allowing Tribes to include road construction, transit, highway safety and other transportation program funds into one agreement governed by one set of rules.

We are confident that the Self-Governance Program will work well within the DOT. Thanks to your efforts in the previous reauthorization, important interpretation and implementation issues have already been evaluated and commented upon by DOT officials. We thank you very much for your efforts on this legislation and look forward to working with you and your staff to ensure that this provision is a core component of the MAP-21 reauthorization and is ultimately signed into law by President Obama.

If you have any questions about these matters please do not hesitate to contact us at rallen@jamestowntribe.org or (206) 369-6699 and wmicklin@cchita.org or (619) 368-4382.

Thank you for your continued support to America Indian and Alaska Native issues.

Sincerely yours,



W. Ron Allen, Tribal Chairman/CEO, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe
Chairman, DOI Self-Governance Advisory Committee
Co-Chairman, Title IV Tribal Self-Governance Workgroup



Will Micklin, 1st Vice-President, Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
Co-Chairman, Title IV Tribal Self-Governance Workgroup

cc: Kevin Washburn, Assistant Secretary Indian Affairs, DOI
Sharee Freeman, Director, Office of Self-Governance, DOI
Robert Sparrow, Tribal Transportation Program, FHWA/DOT
DOI Self-Governance Advisory Committee (SGAC) Members and Technical
Workgroup Members
Self-Governance Tribes