

IHS TRIBAL SELF-GOVERNANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE DOI SELF-GOVERNANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

c/o Self-Governance Communication and Education
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December 3, 2013

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Re: Response to Secretary Kathleen Sebelius July 26, 2013 Letter - Next Steps in Expansion of Tribal Self-Governance within HHS

Dear Madame Secretary:

Thank you for your letter dated July 26, 2013 in response to our request to designate appropriate Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) officials with decision-making authority to engage in dialogue with Tribal representatives in developing a legislative proposal to establish a Self-Governance Demonstration Project. Your letter highlighted the many benefits which resulted from the work of the Self Governance Tribal Federal Workgroup (SGTFW) and stated that you believe these discussions have been helpful and warrant further discussion. Tribal representatives on the SGTFW are in agreement that this process provided many benefits in continuing our efforts to expand Self-Governance within HHS and we would appreciate an opportunity to discuss our collective views on these benefits.

On behalf of the Department of the Interior Self-Governance Advisory Committee (SGAC) and the Indian Health Service Tribal Self-Governance Advisory Committee (TSGAC), the expansion of Self-Governance within HHS continues to be a top priority for Tribal Leaders. This issue was identified during our most recent Self-Governance Strategy Session held on October 30-31, 2013.

We are extremely disappointed that your letter states, "The department does not have plans to create a workgroup for the purpose of working on draft legislation with Tribal representatives". Self-Governance Tribes have attempted to collaborate with HHS over the past 5 years to advance the most successful empowerment of Tribes' sovereign authority and ability to serve our Tribal citizens. However, we agree with you that important Self-Governance discussions should continue to advance this authority and empowerment of the Tribes' agenda. We appreciate the President's commitment to Self-Governance as expressed by Jodi Gillette, Senior Policy Advisor for Native American Affairs, Domestic Policy Council, during her remarks in June.

Therefore, to address the Department's reticence to discuss legislation yet move forward with the crucial work that has already begun, we have modified our request. We are requesting a workgroup be convened with the following charge: *to identify Federal and Tribal representatives who will work together for the following purposes:*

- 1) To identify technical and/or legislative issues related to Tribally-proposed legislation for Self-Governance expansion and recommend approaches to address these issues;
- 2) To identify other Tribal and Federal concerns related to Self-Governance expansion and to recommend approaches to address these issues; and,
- 3) To identify, discuss, and recommend the best approaches to the implementation of Self Governance expansion within HHS.

We believe the approach engendered in this proposed workgroup charge is in accord with your stated desires and will be mutually beneficial to the Department and the Tribes. We request your consideration of this request as a response to your stated concerns and desires "to continue to seek ways to find mutually acceptable solutions to Tribal concerns."

Thank you,



W. Ron Allen, Tribal Chairman/CEO
Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe
Chairman, Department of the Interior
Self-Governance Advisory Committee



Chief Lynn Malerba
Mohegan Tribe
Chairwoman, Indian Health Service
Tribal Self-Governance Advisory Committee

cc: SGTFW Workgroup Members
SGAC and TSGAC Members
SGAC/TSGAC Technical Workgroup