

Chairman Mike Simpson
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Oversight Hearing: Indian Health
March 19, 2013
Opening Statement as Prepared

Good afternoon and welcome to this oversight hearing on Indian health. In 2010, the United States enacted into law the following policy: “A major national goal of the United States is to provide the resources, processes, and structure that will enable Indian tribes and tribal members to obtain the quantity and quality of health care services and opportunities that will eradicate the health disparities between Indians and the general population of the United States.”

A few of those disparities are reflected in these sobering statistics provided by the National Congress of American Indians. Native people die at higher rates than other Americans from:

Tuberculosis: 500%	Injuries: 140%
Alcoholism: 514%	Homicide: 92%
Diabetes: 177%	Suicide: 82%

This subcommittee has over the past several years made funding for Indian health a higher priority. In fact, from 2000 to 2012, funding for the Indian Health Service went from \$2.4 billion to nearly \$4.4 billion before sequestration. No doubt some of that increase was an attempt to keep pace with the nationwide problem of rising medical care costs, but my hope is that the rest of the increase has made a positive difference in people’s lives.

So the FY14 budget delay provides us with this opportunity today to step back and ask the following questions in support of the national goal I stated at the outset: (1) Has the increased funding made a measurable difference in the health of American Indians and Alaska Natives, and why; and (2) Where do we go from here in this constrained fiscal environment?

We are pleased to be joined today by two panels of experts. Our first panelist will be Dr. Yvette Roubideaux, director of the Indian Health Service. After Dr. Roubideaux testifies we will have a round of questions from the subcommittee. Then we will invite up our second panel, which includes:

- Mr. Rex Lee Jim, vice-president of the Navajo Nation, testifying on behalf of the National Indian Health Board;
- Mr. D'Shane Barnett, executive director of the National Council of Urban Indian Health;
- Dr. Kelly Moore, associate professor at the Centers for American Indian and Alaska Native Health at the University of Colorado, testifying on behalf of the Friends of Indian Health; and
- Dr. Henry Fields, professor at the College of Dentistry at the Ohio State University, testifying on behalf of the American Dental Association

Let me also take a moment to welcome our distinguished guests in the audience and the many tribes and tribal organizations around the country who are submitting written testimony for the record. Thank you all for your commitment, and your assistance in helping us to help you.

Before we turn to Dr. Roubideaux, allow me to first ask our distinguished ranking member, Mr. Moran, for any opening remarks he may wish to make.