

**TESTIMONY OF ERIC CHAPMAN, COUNCILMAN  
LAC DU FLAMBEAU BAND OF LAKE SUPERIOR CHIPPEWA INDIANS  
BEFORE THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE  
ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES  
ON INDIAN PROGRAMS IN THE FY2016 BUDGET  
MARCH 25, 2015**

My name is Eric Chapman, I am a Councilman for the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, located in Wisconsin. I am pleased to submit this testimony, which reflects the needs and concerns of our Tribal members for Fiscal Year 2016. My testimony addresses BIA, EPA and IHS programs that are vital to my people.

The President's FY 2016 Budget has some important and positive initiatives for Tribes. For example, fully funding contract support costs and requesting that Congress reclassify this funding as mandatory. Doing so would implement what two Supreme Court cases have already stated is the law. This funding must be paid, it is time that Congress make the necessary changes in the statute to implement the Court's decisions.

**I. GENERATION INDIGENOUS INITIATIVE**

I call on you to fully support the Administration's emphasis on our youth. The Generation Indigenous Initiative is the first time this Nation has taken a comprehensive approach to improving the lives of Indian children. The Administration called on all agencies including those outside of the Department of the Interior and the Indian Health Service to do their part to fulfill the trust responsibility to Indian children. Based on the federal trust responsibility, the federal government should be committed to providing fundamental fairness to Tribes, not just in selected areas but across the board – and appropriations for all programs affecting Indians should provide funding levels based on this fundamental principle.

**BIA Tiwahe (Family) Initiative.** The Tribe strongly supports the continuation of the Administration's Tiwahe initiative, a broad-based, interdisciplinary, and culturally appropriate program for addressing the needs of Indian families and communities – including child welfare and family services, housing and job training. This program fills an immediate and critical need.

At Lac du Flambeau, over the last few years we have faced a crisis in our community arising from a growing epidemic of drug abuse. The problem has been far-reaching – as we find widespread abuse of prescription drugs, synthetic marijuana, and heroin on our Reservation. The impact on our community has been devastating in terms of the health and well-being of our families. This is why the Tribe supports the Administration's request for \$22 million to increase the number of behavioral health providers focused on Indian youth through the Indian Health Care System. We also support the complementing request within the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, including the \$15 million for Tribal Behavioral Health Grants, which is targeted at reducing substance use and the incidence of suicide attempts among Native youth.

The rise in drug abuse often leaves our children caught in unsafe situations at home. This has led to an increase in the need for foster care and other temporary placements for our children. The Administration's \$47 million requested for tribal social service programs and the \$15.6 million requested for Indian Child Welfare programs will help meet this need. In addition the \$28 million requested for tribal courts (\$5 million for tribal family courts) will also ensure that our children are safer as these institutions will have additional resources to supervise and monitor the children in their care

## **I. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**A. Natural Resource Programs.** As we address our communities' social services needs, we are mindful that one of the cornerstones of a healthy community is a healthy environment. Clean air, water and land are vital for the physical and emotional health of our people, and provide both a foundation for our Tribal culture and the basis for economic opportunity on our Reservation. That is our obligation to future generations – to ensure that our lands, air and waters are adequately protected.

**B. Bureau of Indian Affairs Climate Resiliency.** The Tribe endorses the requested \$20 million increase to address the impact of the changing climate on our natural resources. Our community is reliant on our natural resources to survive. If people cannot fish the lakes we have been fishing since the beginning of time or hunt wild game because these resources are not there, who we are as a people will be forever changed.

**C. Tribal Natural Resource Management and Development; Tribal Fish Hatchery Operations and Maintenance.** Tribes are leaders in natural resource protection and BIA natural resource funding is essential to maintain our programs. Lac du Flambeau has a comprehensive Natural Resources Department and dedicated staff with considerable expertise in natural resource and land management. Among our many programs, the Tribe operates a fish hatchery that stocks many of our lakes. Along with our other natural resource programs, our fish production activities are essential to protect our natural resources and to foster economic activity on our Reservation. We support full funding for these programs. According the Bureau of Indian Affairs, this year's request for fish hatchery maintenance should support 40 new projects to address climate change impact on hatcheries. This is important work, but we ask the Committee to be mindful that the operations funding has not received an increase in a number of years. If we do not have the resources to operate these facilities, there is no point in maintaining them.

**D. Circle of Flight: Wetlands Waterfowl Program.** We urge the Subcommittee to continue to provide support for the BIA Circle of Flight Program. This program supports Tribal efforts throughout the Great Lakes Region to restore and preserve wetlands and waterfowl habitat within Tribal territories.

**E. Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission.** The Tribe strongly supports the work of the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission ("GLIFWC"). GLIFWC assists in protecting and implementing its treaty-guaranteed hunting, fishing and gathering rights. We urge the Subcommittee to fully support the programmatic funding for GLIFWC from both BIA and

EPA. GLIFWC has played an invaluable role in providing science and sound management practices for our off-reservation resources. This role could not be filled by any other agency.

**F. Conservation Law Enforcement Officers.** Related to our responsibilities to maintaining our environmental is the need for funding for Conservation Law Enforcement Officers. Conservation Law Enforcement Officers are responsible for enforcing hunting and fishing regulations related to the exercise of treaty rights, but they also are often the first to respond to emergency situations. These officers play an integral part in protecting our cultural and economic resources, as well as assisting with protecting public safety. We urge the Subcommittee to provide funding for Conservation Law Enforcement as an acknowledgement of the importance of Tribal conservation law enforcement officers to the federal law enforcement family.

**G. Transportation.** Proper road maintenance on the Reservation is essential for the safety and health of our community, and for promoting economic opportunities. We urge the Subcommittee to increase funding for the BIA road maintenance program. Please augment the \$2 million increase you saw was justified last year for this important safety programs.

**H. Tribal Historic Preservation Offices.** The Tribe supports the \$15 million requested by the National Tribal Historic Officers Association to fund tribal Historic Preservation Act compliance. While more Tribes have assumed the responsibility under the Historic Preservation Act federal appropriations have not kept pace.

## II. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

**A. EPA Tribal General Assistance Program.** The Tribe strongly supports the proposed \$31 million increase in the EPA Tribal General Assistance Program, known as “Tribal GAP.” This program provides base environmental funding to assist Tribes in building their environmental capacity to assess environmental conditions, utilize available data and build their environmental programs to meet their local needs. This is a foundational program for Tribes to address the broad range of challenging circumstances we face regarding our Reservation environment.

**B. Clean Water Programs.** The Tribe also supports the proposed funding for the pollution control program under section 106, and for non-point source pollution under section 319 of the Clean Water Act. At Lac du Flambeau, the Tribe has obtained Treatment as a State status under the Clean Water Act for establishing water quality standards, and we have an active program to monitor, maintain and improve water quality, as well as a program to address non-point source pollution. Water is basically everywhere on our Reservation, as we have 260 lakes covering over 17,000 acres, as well as 71 miles of streams and 24,000 acres of wetlands. The section 106 and section 319 programs should be funded at the recommended levels to enable tribes to protect their water resources.

**C. Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.** The Tribe strongly supports funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. For the indigenous people of Wisconsin, the Great Lakes represent the lifeblood of our culture and the foundation of our economies. The protection and preservation of the Great Lakes are necessary to preserve the tribal communities that have made the Great Lakes area their home since time immemorial. The funding needs for Tribal initiatives

under this program is \$5.2 million; notwithstanding this need Tribal initiatives were only awarded \$3.8 million. The Tribe asks the Committee to consider a tribal set-aside of this funding to ensure there is parity funding for all tribal needs.

**D. Brownfields.** The Brownfields program provides funding for tribes and others to assess and clean up lands that have been contaminated. Brownfields funding is divided among those seeking funding – so the more tribes that participate in efforts to clean up their contaminated lands, the less money is available for each tribe. While the number of tribes needing these funds has been increasing in recent years, the funding has not. We urge the Subcommittee to provide greater funding so tribes can properly protect their homelands and clean up Brownfields.

#### **IV. EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

Education remains a critical investment in the future of the tribes. The Johnson-O'Malley Program provides vital support for Indian students in public schools. We support the \$17.3 million requested for this Program, and the Subcommittee's continuing oversight to obtain an accurate JOM student count. We must do more for our students in public schools. Likewise, we are proud to see an increasing number of our students attending and graduating from colleges and other post-secondary institutions. But the cost of such education is staggering and funds must be available for our students to succeed in higher education. More scholarship funding is needed. The Tribe also supports the Administration's proposed increase in BIA funding for fellowship and training opportunities for post graduate study.

We also support the \$52.9 million requested for the Department of Education Native Youth Community Projects to support community driven strategies to improve college and career readiness of Native youth in public schools. Empowering tribal communities to meet the needs of their children is at the heart of the Self-Determination policy and is what will lead to a brighter future for our children.

#### **V. INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE PROGRAMS**

The Administration's \$5.1 billion request for the Indian Health Service is a 10% increase in funding above the FY 2015 level. Importantly, some of this increase is dedicated to population growth and medical inflation so that our health care programs can keep pace with the growing need and costs. This increase will allow for a significant investment in Purchased and Referred Care with a \$70 million increase. This increased level of funding should provide for 980 additional hospital admissions, 19,800 additional outpatient visits, and finally, an additional 1,210 patient transports.

Research has clearly demonstrated that our overall health is tied to our oral health. The Lac du Flambeau Tribe recognized this and that is why in 2013 we opened a state of the art dental clinic to serve the needs of our people. No longer are dental visits done by an occasional dental visit at our schools. We are now seeing our members in our facility early and often and are preventing dental disease before it can happen. We fully support the requested \$7 million increase for the dental health services program. This increase will address the not only medical inflation, but also the population increase our community has experienced.