

National Congress of American Indians

823 DUPONT CIRCLE BUILDING

1346 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, N. W.

WASHINGTON 6, D. C.

TELEPHONE ADams 2-3390

September 30, 1954

TO ALL INDIAN TRIBAL COUNCILS
Individual Indians
Friends of Indians:

CLEAR WARNING was given us in the last Session of Congress that it is the intent of Congress to "terminate as rapidly as possible" all special relationships between the federal government and Indians, and that unless we act together and decisively we shall find it is too late to protect our rights and properties and to bring about improved policies and federal services for Indians.

OUR EFFECTIVENESS IN STOPPING HARMFUL LEGISLATION was also clearly demonstrated in the last Session of Congress. WE DID, by working together, prevent the passage of some disastrous legislation for Indians, but that is not enough. Next year we must be prepared not only to defeat intemperate bills, but to bring about enactment of constructive legislation, and this requires better groundwork by ALL OF US.

CONTACTING THE CANDIDATES FOR THE CONGRESS from now until November 2nd is the most vital and urgent work confronting each and all of us, we are convinced. During the month of October the men (and women) running for Congress will be coming to us to ask for our votes. This is the ONLY TIME WE HAVE ANY REAL BARGAINING POWER. WE HAVE THAT BARGAINING POWER IF WE WILL ONLY USE IT for the next four weeks.

EVERY INDIAN TRIBE should send a representative, or better yet, a delegation to see every candidate for Congress; or invite the candidates to a meeting of the Tribal Council or other meeting of Indians; or write the candidates a letter (on Tribal Council stationery if you have it) and get them to tell you what they will do on specific legislation, on all Indian bills generally, and to support your Tribe's position.

The attached letter sets forth the specific points on which NCAI suggests you ask the candidates for commitments. It is a good idea to put your requests to the candidates in writing, even if you go to see them or have them come to a meeting. The attached letter may be used or changed in any way you wish, but for greatest effectiveness we urge you to put your letter on your own stationery, add to it or take from it anything you wish, and to put it in your own handwriting or send it out in whatever way you usually send letters from your Tribal Council.

Actually, many Congressmen want to help Indians but they often do not know what the Indians want. They often do not know which Indian delegations or groups to listen to. Because there are so many bills pending in Congress which they must act upon, most Congressmen do not know what Indian bills are pending, what the bills mean, or what Indians want them to do about the bills. IT IS UP TO US TO GIVE THEM THIS INFORMATION and THERE IS NO MORE ADVANTAGEOUS OR CRITICAL TIME TO DO IT THAN THE NEXT FOUR WEEKS.

Never before have all of us -- at the same time -- undertaken to do a job all at once. Let us try this plan this fall and see what results it will have in the next Session of Congress. Not only should tribal officials and councils take this action, but individual Indian leaders, all organizations of Indian people who support the position of Indians, and all sincere friends of Indians who want to help -- all should undertake this effort right now.

Above all, every Indian tribe and organization should make a most determined effort to get Indian people to register and use the precious and vital strength they have in their votes.

THIS YEAR LET US MAKE OUR POLITICAL STRENGTH FELT. UNLESS WE DO, WE HAVE NO COMPLAINT WHEN OUR CONGRESSMEN VOTE AGAINST INDIAN INTERESTS OR REFUSE TO HELP.

Your NCAI office in Washington will continue to work around the clock if necessary to represent your best interests in the Capital, but it can do no more than build on the foundation ^{which} ~~with~~ YOU LAY RIGHT NOW in the next four weeks.

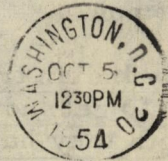
SIGN THE PLEDGE CARD ENCLOSED AND RETURN IT TO US so that we will have some idea of the work going on in the various Indian states.

Most sincerely,

Joseph R. Garry, President
Martin T. Cross, Vice-President
Helen L. Peterson, Executive Director

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