

## Indian Health Among Tribal Programs That Could Re-Open Under Mini Continuing Resolution

Yesterday (October 3, 2013), the House of Representatives approved for House Floor consideration several measures which would end the government shutdown for select agencies. Among these was a resolution offered by Chairman of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee Mike Simpson (R-ID) to continue funding for several programs critical to Indian Country. The “American Indian and Alaska Native, Health, Education, and Safety Act” (H.J.Res.80), would fund the Indian Health Service (IHS), The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) until December 15, 2013. This bill would provide funding for these programs at FY 2013 funding levels, and still maintain sequestration cuts. In addition to this bill there were also measures approved for consideration that would fund nutrition assistance for low-income women and children (H.J.Res.75) Impact Aid, (H.J.Res.83) and Head Start (H.J.Res.84).

The National Indian Health Board (NIHB) appreciates that the House Leadership views these Tribal services as sufficiently essential to require special consideration while a larger government funding agreement remains under negotiation. Tribes across the Country struggle with bitterly difficult decisions about *whether* or *which* services they can continue to provide without government funds. NIHB is truly grateful that Chairman Simpson as well as other House leaders and Members recognize this and have undertaken efforts to ensure that vital programs serving Indian country continue. However, NIHB also recognizes that Tribes depend on many programs outside IHS, BIA and BIE – and all of these programs are part of the Federal government’s Trust responsibility to the sovereign Tribal nations of the United States.

If it is to uphold its Trust responsibility to American Indians and Alaska Natives, Congress must end this stand-off and come to an agreement on a long-term funding strategy for FY 2014 and beyond. In the case of Indian health - the Indian Health Service is funded at only 56 percent of need and the shutdown, combined with draconian sequestration cuts, is harming the lives of American Indians and Alaska Natives. The struggles experienced by Tribal health programs during this government shutdown are just the latest examples of why sequestration and rescissions should be ended for health services for American Indians and Alaska Natives – as well as **all** programs affecting Tribes and their citizens.

It is unclear when these measures could come before the House for a vote - it could be as early as next week. It is important to note that the divisive political climate in Washington, DC makes it unlikely that the Senate will consider these bills – even if approved by the House. Further, President Obama has said he would veto these measures if they clear Congress. Please stay tuned to NIHB for further updates on H.J.Res.80 as well as other information on the government shutdown.

A full list of the bills approved for House consideration can be found at [www.rules.house.gov](http://www.rules.house.gov).

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