

NOTES TO THE NATION MARCH 26, 2009

ANOTHER VIEW FROM CONGRESS

The following is a letter from Congresswoman Faren Anderson where she expresses her views on the Chief's new protocol.

Chief Gray's Protocol on Communication

While sitting in the Osage Nation all-employee meeting on Monday, March 23rd, I became both disappointed and disgusted. I had in my hand a copy of the "Executive Branch Protocol and Procedures for Working and Communicating to the Osage Nation Congress", but I had in my heart pure sadness. I felt that it was a shame that the employees of this great Nation were told not to be "creative" but to keep their opinions to themselves and that fear for losing their job was at stake if they communicated to a Congress person anything other than the Chief's opinion on any matter. All I could think were three words....CENSURE, DICTATORSHIP, and MICRO-MANAGEMENT. Words I would never want to use when describing the leadership of the Osage Nation. At once, I sympathized for the employees that work so hard to learn the skills of their job and become proficient in their departments. For under this new protocol, those employees would not have the opportunity to express their knowledge of their department when it came to communicating to the Congress, unless...it coincided with the Chief's position.

It was stated by Chief Gray and his executive employees that this protocol was to insure that "Congress gets the correct and precise information." What worried me is the fact that Chief Gray seems to be more concerned with the information Congress acquires from the Nation's employees, than he is with the information that the employees are giving out to the people they serve....you, the Constituents. Not once have I seen an Executive Branch policy that states *every bit of information that an employee gives out from their department must be documented and sent to the Chief for prior approval before a customer can be served.* Maybe that policy is established and I just haven't seen it. Or, maybe that is the next policy Chief Gray will put into place. If so, don't be in a hurry to get anything from the Executive Branch of the Osage Nation....Congress Members have made official requests as far back as two years ago and have yet to receive an answer.

It concerned me the most when the current Interim Editor of the Osage News asked the question "what if this protocol inhibits an employee from completing his/her job correctly and in order to do the job correctly, cannot abide by this policy?" The answer given by Chief of Staff Hepsi Barnett was 'if the protocol is not followed, then the employees' job may be on the line.' To which the Chief stood up and said to the Interim Editor "Well, maybe we will have to make exceptions to this policy". If the policy of employees communicating to the Congress is to only state the Chief's position, it should make you ask yourself what a policy like this would do to articles in the Osage News?

After the meeting, one quote I saw posted by an employee was the following.....

"AS AN OSAGE NATION EMPLOYEE..... I am Osage and I elected our officials in Congress and in the Executive Branch. I elected them based on their ideas for the tribe and what they believed in and I had full trust they would do the best for the Osage Nation. If I have a concern or idea about what I would like to see in the Government or what's going on, I will contact my officials, especially in Congress. I'm not signing any paper to talk to them. Free speech applies to us in the Osage also. Don't threaten myself or my fellow co-workers. Try to fire me. We will go to court, I (and many other employees) will win, and then people's true colors will be revealed."

