

NOTES TO THE NATION APRIL 1, 2009

PER CAPITA BILL STILL BEING CONSIDERED

Kind of in a hurry so I'm just sending some notes on what is going on with Per Capita bill. It is still in the initial stages of being drawn up into a completed bill. If you have seen any charts or comparisons of this bill and any other, I hope you didn't waste any time looking at them because the final bill will most likely be changed a great deal before it's ready to present to the public.

Even so, one group is already tearing away at the appetizer as if it's their final meal. At a meeting yesterday we were presented with 4 petitions that were presented as opposition to the Per Capita bill. We naturally thought they were four filled petitions. When I finally looked at them today, we found that one had 13 signatures, 11 of the signers were close relatives of Chief Gray; one had two signatures: one had 4 signatures with one being the Chief's sister and one had one signature of a lady who had already signed one of the other petitions.

I already have a good idea how one family might feel about this bill and, of course, that's their right. But, we can't let one group dictate for the whole Nation. When the bill is completed, there will be plenty of time for everyone to consider it.

At this time the opposition is forming around the notion that our people are not responsible enough to handle money themselves and they need big government to do it for them. A holdover, I suppose, from the days when many of our people were considered wards of the government and needed supervision. My father was a restricted Osage Indian all his life, but when I turned 21 I was automatically issued a Certificate of Competency. It probably should have been the other way around—but, that's another story.

The world has changed much in the last century and our people have proved the equal of any other in this world. We have the added stability and confidence of knowing we have a living tradition which bridges a glorious past to a promising future.

I want to share with you an email that is typical of the responses I have been receiving:

I agree with a lot that was said by the Osage Shareholders organization, that we are not children and most people do have a good idea of how they would spend any funds given to tribal members. We all have family and friends who have problems with drugs and alcohol but I resent the fact that the dissenters feel that is the only thing that a per cap would pay for. These dissenters denigrate our whole tribe by saying that the per cap will be spent on unnecessary things. I also agree that they only look at what takes place in Osage county, there are a lot of us that live outside the county and many times we are not consulted as to what our thoughts on issues may be. I cannot stress enough that we are adults and we do not need someone looking over our shoulders telling us not to buy candy or other unnecessary things. In a traditional sense we were raised by our parents and when we became adults we lived as we were trained, when we made mistakes we were the ones that made them and we were the ones that had to correct whatever had been done not our parents, in this case not those opposed to the per cap. My support grows stronger as the opposition becomes more open.

Joe Shunkamolah