

NOTES TO THE NATION SEPTEMBER 25, 2008

HEALTH BENEFIT APPROPRIATION BILL HELD IN COMMITTEE

At our regular session on September 24 at 10:00 AM the Congress passed ONCA 08-46 Osage Nation Health Benefit Act passed by a vote of 8 to 3.

<http://www.osagetribe.com/congress/uploads/FY08%20Tzi-zho%20Session/FY08%20Tzi-zho%20Introduced%20Legislation/o0846eng.pdf>

The Appropriations Committee met at 5:00 PM later that day to consider funding ONCA 08-46 with Appropriations Bill ONCA 08-47. Assistant Chief John Red Eagle attended that meeting and reported that the Health and Wellness Board had issued a letter on September 16 with recommendations for change. (I have attached a copy of this letter.) Although the letter says “minor changes” when the Assistant Chief presented the letter it seemed he was suggesting some major changes such as weighting the benefits in favor of our older citizens.

In addition the listed changes recommended, I had a concern with a clause in the bill that could cause an entire “family unit” to lose coverage because of the actions of one member—with no definition of “family unit.”

Someone had placed a copy of this letter on my desk sometime last week and because of it I had voted against ONCA 08-46. At that time I assumed that all members of Congress had the letter when we voted on the bill yesterday. Last night we discovered that Atterbury had not seen it until after the morning vote. Branstetter and Anderson saw it first at the 5:00 PM meeting.

Today, we discovered that it had not been disclosed to Mason, Simms, Revard and Shackelford either.

Assistant Chief Red Eagle said that, on the 16th, the Health and Wellness was asked to pass a motion in support of the bill ONCA 08-46. When the motion was made they could not get a second and the motion died.

The Health and Wellness Board is a board funded by the Osage Nation at a cost of \$55,000 last year to advise the Nation of health matters. It is also in the 2009 budget.

Some information has been sent out in discussion of the Act and its funding but somehow these important points have been omitted.

My assessment is that it would be prudent to fix the Act before it is funded and launched.

