

## **Update #49**

*The views, opinions and commentary in this update are those of Congressman Red Corn. They are his alone, and do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of the Osage Nation Congress.*

### **Funding for Osage News cut**

Funding to distribute the Osage News was cut out of the Communications Budget yesterday by a close vote in the Government Operations Committee. The budget had previously been advanced, but was brought back for Committee consideration. A motion was made to cut 102,000 from the budget (the amount allocated to distribute the newspaper). The measure passed 3-2. Voting for the cut was Congresspersons Supernaw, Branstetter (tie-breaker) and Shackelford. Voting against the cut was Congressman Freeman and Speaker Mason.

The previous day on a similar failed measure, I had removed myself from vote and debate, as my spouse owns a newspaper that circulates in the same general area. I abstained from both votes. During debate on Tuesday, at least one Committee member expressed displeasure with recent Osage News content.

I support the funding of the printing of the paper, as I believe the Congress will prevail in the pending court action.

The fate of the Osage News is unclear, as the Committee left intact both salaries and other operation expenses. If the case drags out, we will have two employees preparing content for a paper that cannot be printed or mailed.

I have fully supported the Independent Press Act (including override) in hopes of bringing balanced coverage to the Osage News. The appeal to the court on behalf of the Executive Branch to declare the Act unconstitutional is being considered by the court, and a ruling is expected soon.

### **Actions on Palace Grocery**

The Palace Grocery has been one of two success stories over the past year. Once a consistent money-loser, the Palace has not requested any tribal funds in FY2008 or FY2009. They did request to retain 2008 earnings to diversify and expand operations. I supported that retention, although in today's committee action those profits were removed from the 2009 budget.

I think this sends the wrong signal to the Palace. Work hard, make tough decisions, reorganize, and stop the bleeding, and your reward is to have your profits immediately taken by the Nation. The Palace intended to use those profits to expand the sale of non-

perishables, i.e. paper goods, to the Nations programs and entities. The Palace also intended to expand the market to include other nearby tribes. The Commerce Committee's actions today remove last year's profits and could slow or endanger the success of the expansion effort, in my opinion.

The person responsible for the turnaround is Ms. Jackie McCann, an Osage from Pawhuska. She comes from a long line of Osage cooks; her Aunt Marion Cass and Lily Cunningham among them. Jackie left a distinguished career with Wal-Mart, have served as manager of Supercenters and Wal-Mart Neighborhood Markets. To my knowledge, there is no Osage person with more retail grocery experience to be had. Jackie and her expertise are directly responsible for the turnaround at the Palace, in my opinion.

There's an old adage in investing; cut your losses, and let your profits run. We are not letting our profits run in Fairfax. If our strategy is to remove profits from a properly managed and growing business we are destined to fail miserably, as each and every business will have its profits milked off by the Nation before they can be reinvested.

We should remember that the Palace Grocery is wholly owned by the Nation. If Ms. McCann retains those funds in Palace accounts and reinvests them for expansion, they still belong to the Nation. We didn't need the \$218,000 – we have approximately \$27 million in the bank.

Voting for the removal of profits were Congresspersons Supernaw, Simms, Shackelford and Red Eagle. I voted no. A motion to reinstate the funds as a tribal contribution failed by an identical vote

As always, please call or email with your questions, comments, or concerns.

With respect,

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