

pdate #56

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.

Congress inserts process exception for itself into Ethics bill

The Congress voted 7-4 Tuesday to eliminate its exposure to ethics complaints filed in Osage courts. It did so by passing amendments to ONCA 08-33 that will force any citizen filing an ethics complaint against a member of Congress to file that complaint with Congress instead of the Trial Court prosecutor.

The amendment, offered by Congressman Simms, allows no avenue of appeal if a citizen's complaint is dismissed by the Congress. In other words, if the Congress doesn't agree that an ethics violation occurred, that's the end of the matter.

Under the new amendment, all employees of the Osage government, the Executive Branch, the Judicial Branch, boards and commissions will operate under a different set of procedures than the Congress. If the Ethics bill passes, any citizen could bring an ethics complaint against Osage officials and employees (except Congress) under the law and file it directly with the Osage courts. Before today's amendment, the process was the same for everyone in the bill.

How this action affects public opinion of the Congress remains to be seen.

Voting for the amendment was Congresspersons Red Eagle, Supernaw, Shackelford, Revard, Anderson, Branstetter and Simms. Voting against the amendment were Congresspersons Atterberry, Freeman, Edwards and I. Speaker Mason was absent today for health reasons.

Health Benefit bill (ONCA 08-46) passes 8-3

A bill to provide a \$500 Health Benefit debit card to every Osage man, woman and child passed today by an 8-3 vote. Sponsored by Congresswoman Edwards and co-sponsored by Congresspersons Atterberry, Freeman, and I, the bill provides an annual benefit of \$500 in the form of a debit card, and could be used to purchase a wide variety of health products and services.

(In her remarks Congresswoman Edwards credited an unidentified Update reader with the idea of issuing a debit card for a wide range of benefits as opposed to the original concept of a prescription drug benefit. Unfortunately, the Update reader's insightful email containing the suggestion has been lost to cyberspace. If you are reading this, please identify yourself; your suggestion has become law!)

The bill was designed with an Emergency Clause that would have allowed implementation as soon as January, but the Emergency Clause failed 7-4 (8 votes are required to pass an Emergency Clause. This will most likely push the implementation back 60 days.

Voting for the benefit were Congresspersons Edwards, Atterberry, Freeman, Red Eagle, Revard, Simms, Branstetter and I. Voting against were Congresspersons Supernaw, Shackelford and Anderson.

The appropriation for the bill is \$5 million, and is contained in bill ONCA 08-47. The funding bill for the benefit was reported out by the Health Committee on September 15th and was assigned to the Appropriations Committee. The Appropriations Committee (Congresspersons Anderson, Red Eagle, Supernaw, Branstetter and Atterberry) will consider the funding bill tomorrow at a 5 p.m. meeting.

As always, your comments and thoughts are welcome. Please feel free to contact me at any time to share your thoughts on the issues facing the Osage Nation.

With respect,

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