



UNITED STATES SENATE

GORDON H. SMITH

U.S. SENATOR FOR OREGON

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Smith Works to Protect Vital Funds for Oregon Tribes

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senator Gordon H. Smith (R-OR) led an effort in the Senate Indian Affairs Committee today to ensure equity in the distribution of funds to federally-recognized tribes for health care facility improvements. Senator Smith expressed concern that the current legislative proposal, the Indian Health Care Improvement Act Amendments of 2007, favors construction projects in a few states, preventing Oregon tribes, as well as many others from across the country, from receiving needed funds.

“Throughout the United States, Native American tribes are working to provide necessary health care services to their communities,” said Senator Smith. “In many areas, these efforts are hamstrung by buildings that are outdated and ill-equipped. It is simply unjust to prioritize projects in a few states over those in states like Oregon that desperately need federal support to provide facility improvements. Equity is needed in the distribution of funds so tribes in Oregon, and across the country, can get the dollars they deserve.”

“Senator Smith’s amendment will bring equity to the facilities construction funding process,” said Linda Holt, Chairperson of the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board. “The current process is broken and in serious need of repair. The current system allocates a disproportionate share of resources to a select few Tribal communities that result in gaps in the level of health services provided to Indian people. Senator Smith’s amendment will allow Tribes across the IHS system to share equally in facilities construction process.”

Senator Smith filed an amendment to the Indian Health Care Improvement Act Amendments of 2007 that would allow for a portion of facility construction funds to be distributed equitably among all of the 12 Indian Health Service Areas for local projects. Senator Smith offered and withdrew his amendment this morning after securing a commitment from Chairman Byron Dorgan (D-ND) to work with him to provide funding equity in the final version of the bill.

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