

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 30
INTRODUCED BY J. WINDY BOY

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING THAT THE WHITE HOUSE OFFICE OF FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES BE ENCOURAGED TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICES OF TRADITIONAL INDIAN CULTURES ARE UNIQUE TO EACH TRIBE, THAT TRIBAL LEADERS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL BE CONSULTED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ANY PROGRAMS, AND THAT THE AMERICAN INDIAN WELFARE REFORM ACT FOR THE OPERATION OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE BY INDIAN TRIBES BE SUPPORTED.

WHEREAS, President George W. Bush established the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives by executive order on January 29, 2001, in order to help the federal government coordinate a national effort to expand opportunities for faith-based and other community organizations and to strengthen their capacity to better meet social needs in America's communities; and

WHEREAS, the goal of the office is compassionate results with the values of pluralism, nondiscrimination, evenhandedness, and neutrality in facing issues such as strengthening families and neighborhoods, curbing crime, conquering addiction, and overcoming poverty; and

WHEREAS, Indian communities face similar issues and have always been faith-based communities with cultural knowledge and spiritual beliefs unique to each community, yet there is no specific language in the executive order to recognize the unique, spiritual nature of each tribal culture and the oldest cultural practices in the United States; and

WHEREAS, many of the programs funded under the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives are driven by specific denominations who wish to provide services to Indian people without having consulted the tribal representatives at the local level to determine the appropriateness of the services to the community and to determine whether there is a possible infringement on the cultural and spiritual beliefs of the community; and

WHEREAS, to the extent that state agencies and advisory councils are used to determine where federal resources, such as the Compassion Capital Fund, are expended, the state should respect the government-to-government relationship between its representative state agencies and each tribal government and work with each tribal government to develop best practices with respect to self-determination in the delivery of social services in relation to the spiritual aspects of traditional Indian cultures; and

WHEREAS, there are unique opportunities to coordinate efforts under the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives with other social service efforts;

WHEREAS, the State of Montana supports passage of the American Indian Welfare Reform Act proposed by Senator Max Baucus, which has been introduced in Congress, the purpose of which is to reauthorize and improve the operation of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) programs that are currently operated by Indian tribes or that in the future may be operated by Indian tribes and which calls for a report on the best practices with respect to the delivery of social services in relation to all tribal TANF programs and systemic aspects of the tribal TANF programs and relations between state and tribal administrators of TANF; and

WHEREAS, the President has signed an executive order on December 12, 2002, for equal protection of the laws for faith-based and community organizations that does not allow for discrimination on the basis of religion or religious belief and may not discriminate against current or prospective program beneficiaries based on their beliefs.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and any programs that are implemented by state governments in conjunction with that office and the Compassion Capital Fund be encouraged to recognize that spiritual practices of traditional Indian cultures are unique to each tribe.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that recipients of grants or other funds for social services or other efforts under the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives programs be required by the federal and state agencies that are involved to consult with each tribal government at the local level before implementation of any programs in reservation communities in order to allow for self-determination in the implementation of these programs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that efforts such as the federal American Indian Welfare Reform Act proposed by Senator Max Baucus be supported in order to provide the tools for self-determination and culturally relevant efforts to address self-sufficiency among tribal TANF recipients and tribal communities, and that efforts of self-determination of all tribal nations be culturally relevant and be determined at the most local level by the tribal leaders.

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