

**Statement of Ben Nighthorse Campbell**  
**Hearing on the Report on BIA Management and Administration**

April 12, 2000

Today we will hear testimony regarding the Report of the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) on BIA management problems and its recommendations on overcoming those problems. A little history is in order before we begin.

Since it was established as part of the War Department in 1824, the BIA has been studied and reorganized more times than any agency in the federal government as far as I can tell.

The Meriam Report of 1928, the 1989 Report of the Special Subcommittee on Investigations, and the 1994 Joint Tribal / DoI / BIA Task Force on BIA Reorganization to name but a few have served to highlight the problems in the BIA.

I think it is fair to say that most of the “remedies” proposed for the last 176 years have been more about “moving the boxes” around within the Bureau than about *real* reforms leading to a more effective Bureau.

In my mind the NAPA report reinforces the real issue regarding the future of the BIA --- how, in the Indian Self Determination Era, can we encourage and expedite the evolution of the BIA from an agency that is a “direct service provider” to one that provides technical assistance and guidance to Indian tribes and *then gets out of the way*.

I want to make clear that proposed changes in the BIA structure or operation should be fully aired *before* they are implemented and I would hope that Assistant Secretary Gover looks to both the tribes and this Committee for guidance in that regard.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today and to the NAPA recommendations on how we can work to improve the BIA’s performance in order to raise the Indians’ standard of living and to fulfill the trust obligations of the United States.