

Statement of Ben Nighthorse Campbell
Chairman – Committee on Indian Affairs
Hearing On S.979, Tribal Self Governance Amendments of 1999

July 28, 1999

In July, 1970, President Nixon delivered his “Message to Congress” laying the groundwork for what has become the most successful federal Indian policy to date --- Indian Self Determination.

Based on the government-government relationship, Self Governance allows tribes to step into the shoes of the U.S. and administer federal programs and services provided by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health Service.

Since its inception, Self Governance has resulted in higher quality services, more skilled tribal personnel, political and economic self determination among tribes, and in many instances a more efficient use of scarce federal dollars.

My colleagues are familiar with the poor state of Native health: diabetes, cancer, alcoholism, drug abuse, and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (among other diseases) are rampant in Native communities.

Today the Committee will receive testimony on **S.979**, legislation I introduced in May along with Senator McCain to amend the *Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act*.

As of FY1999, Indian tribes managed some 43% of all IHS dollars dedicated to providing health care to their members.

In just 5 years, it is projected that the majority of all IHS dollars will be administered by tribes either through self determination contracts or self governance compacts.

The legislation we consider today will facilitate that transition.

S.979 will make permanent the IHS Self Governance Demonstration Project within the Department of Health and Human Services.

In addition to making the demonstration project permanent, **S.979** would take expand Self Governance by establishing a “Demonstration Project” for other, non-IHS programs within the HHS.

Together with legislation the Committee will consider next week to elevate the position of the IHS director to Assistant Secretary; and to expand the direct billing by tribes for Medicaid and Medicare reimbursements, I believe **S.979** will pave the way for improved health conditions for Native people.