

PRESS RELEASE: Senate Committee on Indian Affairs Advances “Health Care Access for Urban Native Veterans Act” and Nomination of RADM Weahkee

Category: Press Release

written by Meredith Raimondi | December 12, 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The National Council of Urban Indian Health was one of 88 organizations providing letters of support for RADM Weahkee.

NCUIH Representatives at the Hearings Today: Carla Lott, Francys Crevier, Kerry Hawk Lessard, Maureen Rosette, Walter Murillo, Jamie Ishcomer-Aazami

Washington, DC (December 11, 2019)— Today, December 11, 2019, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs held a markup on S. 2365, the Health Care Access for Urban Native Veterans Act and a Nomination Hearing to consider RADM Michael D. Weahkee, of New Mexico, to be Director of the Indian Health Service, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. S. 2365 was ordered to be reported favorably by voice vote by the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

“Passing the Health Care Access for Urban Native Veterans Act through the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs is a monumental step in ensuring the health and wellness of urban Native Veterans,” said Francys Crevier, Executive Director of the National Council of Urban Indian Health, **“Native people serve in the military at a higher rate than any other population and when they come home from serving our country, Native Veterans deserve the right to access culturally competent health care at an Urban Indian Health program. We thank Chairman Hoeven and the Committee for their outstanding leadership on moving this legislation forward to help our Native Veterans.”**

“We write to express our support of the nomination of Rear Admiral (RADM) Michael D. Weahkee. Despite comprising over two-thirds of AI/ANs, urban Indians are too often excluded from federal policies and programs designed to carry out the trust responsibility. While serving in his post, RADM Weahkee has repeatedly established his understanding that UIOs are an integral part of the Indian health system, which is comprised of the Indian Health Service (IHS), Tribes, and tribal organizations, and urban Indian organizations (collectively, I/T/Us),” wrote NCUIH Board President Maureen Rosette in the [nominating letter](#).

“In partnership with Tribes and Urban Indian Organizations, we have developed a comprehensive and aggressive five-year strategic plan for the IHS, focused on expanding access to care, improving the quality of care that we provide, and improving the management and operations of the Agency,” said Rear Admiral Michael D. Weahkee, Nominee

for Director of the Indian Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services in his opening statement.

The IHS is an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services responsible for providing federal health care to approximately 2.6 million American Indians and Alaska Natives. In 37 states, there are over 605 hospitals, clinics, and health stations located on or near tribal communities under the purview of the IHS and 41 urban Indian health programs. The Director of the IHS oversees the administration of health care programs and services within the agency, including management of the budget of approximately \$6.9 billion and employment of more than 15,000 professionals.

More Information

- [Recording of Hearing](#)
- [Weahkee Opening Remarks](#)
- [NCUIH Letter of Nomination for RADM Weahkee](#)
- [View NCUIH one-pager on VA-IHS Memorandum of Understanding](#)
- [NCAI Resolution Passed](#)
- [NCUIH Press Release on SCIP Hearing](#)
- [Udall, Khanna Bill Introduction Press Release](#)
- [NCUIH Press Release on Introduction](#)
- [AP Story: Bill would expand health care options for Native veterans](#)