

Ronald Reagan Presidential Library Digital Library Collections

This is a PDF of a folder from our textual collections.

Collection: Barr, William: Files
Folder Title: [American Indians]
Box: 1

To see more digitized collections visit:
<https://reaganlibrary.gov/archives/digital-library>

To see all Ronald Reagan Presidential Library inventories visit:
<https://reaganlibrary.gov/document-collection>

Contact a reference archivist at: reagan.library@nara.gov

Citation Guidelines: <https://reaganlibrary.gov/citing>

National Archives Catalogue: <https://catalog.archives.gov/>

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 27

Bill:

I bugged Ken Smith's secretary a couple of times about this letter. She was told that, since he is drafting a response for Sec. Watt, a White House response wasn't necessary. I checked with Betty Ayers and she said she wanted to read the letter to decide if Watt's is enough. She will be letting you know early in the week. If it is, all we need to do is send Harper a copy of the Watt letter.

Tricia

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 2, 1983

MEMO FOR KEN SMITH

FROM: BILL BARR

The President received the attached letter from Senator Goldwater. Please prepare a response that the White House can send to the Senator. If Secretary Watt has already answered, we would be interested in seeing his letter.

We hope to receive the draft response by close of business on Friday, May 6.

OFFICE OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT

STAFFING MEMORANDUM

DATE: 4/14/83 ACTION/CONCURRENCE/COMMENT DUE BY: April 21, 1983
 SUBJECT: Letter From Senator Barry Goldwater (R-Arizona) re: Indian Concerns
(w/ memo from Duberstein to Harper)

	ACTION	FYI		ACTION	FYI
✓ HARPER	☐	☒	DRUG POLICY	☐	☐
✓ PORTER	☐	☒	TURNER	☐	☐
✓ BARR	☒	☐	D. LEONARD	☐	☐
BLED SOE	☒	☐	OFFICE OF POLICY INFORMATION		
BOGGS	☐	☐	HOPKINS	☐	☐
BRADLEY	☐	☐	PROPERTY REVIEW BOARD	☐	☐
✓ CARLESON	☒	☐	OTHER		
DENEND	☒	☐	_____	☐	☐
FAIRBANKS	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐
FERRARA	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐
GALEBACH	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐
GARFINKEL	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐
GUNN	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐
B. LEONARD	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐
LI	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐
MONTOYA	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐
ROCK	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐
ROPER	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐
SMITH	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐
UHLMANN	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐
ADMINISTRATION	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐

REMARKS:

Draft response for ELH signature.

*Please return this tracking
sheet with your response*

Edwin L. Harper
Assistant to the President
for Policy Development

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

April 13, 1983

MEMORANDUM TO: ED HARPER
FROM: KEN DUBERSTEIN *KD*
SUBJECT: Letter from Senator Barry Goldwater (R-Arizona)
Regarding Indian Concerns

I have today forwarded to the President the attached letter from Senator Goldwater which expresses his concerns on behalf of American Indians in Arizona and throughout the country. This letter is of particular significance because of Senator Goldwater's comments linking this issue to foreign aid.

I advised the President that my office would coordinate with your office the response to this correspondence.

*Janice - send
action to
Barry Goldwater to
draft a response*

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

April 11, 1983

COMMITTEES:
INTELLIGENCE, CHAIRMAN
ARMED SERVICES
TACTICAL WARFARE, CHAIRMAN
PREPAREDNESS
STRATEGIC AND THEATRE NUCLEAR FORCES
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMUNICATIONS, CHAIRMAN
AVIATION
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SPACE
INDIAN AFFAIRS

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C. 20500

136209

Dear Mr. President:

Hardly an hour goes by, that somebody doesn't berate some group, the government, corporations, labor unions, you name it, for not being sensitive to human rights. Mr. President, I don't think I have heard this term applied to the most grossly abused people in this field that I know of--the American Indian. Now, I am not addressing this letter to you as just another Senator; I represent a state that has about one-third of all the Indians living in the lower 48 states. Sixteen tribes living on 20 reservations, almost 30 percent of our total land area. I'm not appealing to you in this letter from the standpoint of human rights, I'm talking to you about moral obligations that our government has, not just to my Indians but, to the Indians of the entire nation.

These Indians, whether they live on reservations created by treaties or by Executive Order, live under agreements made with tribes that have all the solemn obligations that the Constitution calls for in relations to other countries.

But, let's forget all of that. In over the 207 years that we have had a government, in well over a hundred years of our relationship with our Indians, we have never, I repeat, never, lived up to the moral obligations that we owe these people. We owe any person moral decency; we owe them all that we can do. In the words of Abraham Lincoln, "we have the obligation to take care of those who cannot well take care of themselves, not take care of themselves at all."

I'm going to quote you a few statistics gathered at a hearing I attended just a few days ago before the Indian tribes of my state because these items of neglect can be multiplied by every state who have Indians and the same sad story can be told every place we go. I think we pay far more attention to the human rights of people living in the countries of South Africa, or Central America, or you name it, than we pay to the human rights of Indians living within our states. But, let me go on with these shameful statistics. Let me cite you just a few indications to prove what I am telling you is true. The Papago Indian Tribe occupies three different reservations, but the main one is over 5,000 square miles in extent and has about 13 thousand people with one hospital having X number of hospital beds. A number of years ago, this hospital burned down and believe it or not, it took ten years to reconstruct it. These people live in a rather isolated situation; in other words, there are very few communities on this vast reservation and very poor communications, so if somebody is badly hurt it's a question of communications and finding transportation to the small community of Sells. They have the highest rate of people on dialysis of any group in the country; but yet the Indian Health Service has threatened to halt treatment of new end-stage renal dialysis patients.

As for eligibility of Federal Indian Health Services and Bureau of Indian Affairs programs, there never has been a determining point that could be used to judge who is an Indian. Most of my tribes would like to see eligibility for services under the BIA and IHS limited to those who are at least one-fourth Indian blood but today, anybody can testify that they have even the remotest amount of Indian blood and they are entitled to services and this accounts for a large, large number of the Indian demands on the badly stretched services. Another Indian leader at the hearing testified and I quote him, "In all of my years as Tribal leader, I've never seen such inconsistency in Indian policy. The Congressional committees must exert more control over the federal agencies responsible for delivering services or there will simply be no services left." This comes from one of our best equipped, highly educated Tribal leaders but it is typical of the feelings of all Tribal leaders.

Now, a look at what is probably the oldest tribe living on the continental United States: the Hopis, who have lived on their mesas and in their villages for probably close to 3,000 years. They bring much of the color, much of the culture to this part of the United States; but, look at their problems. We talk about decentralization. In 1979, there were 67 positions in the Phoenix Indian Health Service Area offices. In 1982, it had gone up to 139 positions. The Hopi tribe has one hospital at Keams Canyon; they also do not have a high school, never have had; but, there is money in the Jobs Bill to at least start a high school. Through the Hopi Health Professions Program there were 59 students in 1982 and in 1983 there was one graduated with a MSW. These people are isolated from nearby towns; there is no communication system, although the Indian Health Service have been asking for one for years and years. Imagine, that in this land of sophisticated communications, there is no high frequency radios available for the vast Navajo Reservation and the Hopi Reservation to call into the Indian Health Centers for medical aid. Communications is done by isolated telephones and there is no way for the person who is sending the message to know whether they need a doctor, two doctors, nurses or what and after the Indian Health Service has received the information, they don't have fast, rapid transportation to get to the patient or get the patient to whatever aid they can offer. Let's take another look. Eight hospital beds were closed at Keams Canyon due to shortage of nurses. It's been reduced to being open only three days a week, resulting in a decrease in the available and accessibility of primary care and preventive health services to 67 percent of the Hopis living more than 20 miles from the hospital. Non-prescription drugs are no longer provided and patients must purchase them at reservation trading posts prices, which are more than 2 1/2 times the price at stores located 100 miles away in Flagstaff or Winslow. There has been the elimination of one physician position and the elimination of training and educational opportunities of employees.

The vast Navajo Reservation, the largest that we have, and the largest population of any Indian tribe, does not need any detailed description by me as to their lack of health and education facilities, decent roads running north and south, communications and on down the list. These people have the highest unemployment rate in the United States and suffer along with the other Indians.

The President
April 11, 1983

Page Three

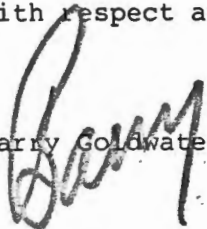
Our Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs staff has been informally advised that the Department of Health and Human Services no longer intends to engage in the construction of hospitals serving Indian people.

As a matter of fact, the Indian Health Service has refused to release funds appropriated by the Congress in Fiscal Years 1982 and 83 for the planning and design of hospitals, particularly one at Sacaton which serves the Gila Indian Community.

And so it goes, Mr. President, on and on and on, and yet all we hear about human rights in Washington are the abuses heaped upon people living in countries thousands of miles away from us. Of course, we hear about the abuses heaped upon some of our people within the United States, but I am talking about Indians, Mr. President, people who were here long before our forefathers ever heard of this part of the world or thought of coming here. I'm not speaking about "lo, the poor Indian and what we have done to him in taking his lands." That is beside the point. What we are talking about is the moral question; what do we do about being decent to these people? What are we doing about educating them; what do we do about providing health for them? What do we do about living up to the obligations we have established for ourselves in dealing with countries around this world? The Navajo Tribe, for example, represents 17 1/2 percent of the national Indian population but receives only 13 percent of the total Indian budget.

I am making this personal plea to you, Mr. President, and I am including it in a letter to Secretary Watt, who I know understands this problem, to Secretary Heckler, and I'm also putting it in the Congressional Record and making it available to the Select Committee on Indian Affairs, because as a member of the United States Senate, as an American citizen, who has lived most of his life with these Indians, I'm just plain fed up, sick and tired of the neglect of these people while at the same time you are asking us for millions, hundreds of millions, yes billions of dollars, to give to people scattered around this world to help in establishing human rights. Please, Mr. President, let's establish something in our own backyard that we can begin to be proud of before we wander around this earth trying to teach other people how to live and how to act toward each other. Let's act toward each other in this country like we really meant what we talk about.

With respect and best wishes,


Barry Goldwater



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

JUL 29 1983

MEMORANDUM

To: William P. Barr
Deputy Assistant Director
for Legal Policy
The White House

Subject: Senator Goldwater's Letter of April 11, 1983

Enclosed is a copy of Secretary Watt's response to Senator Goldwater as requested in your memo of May 2. We assume that HHS or OMB will provide input for your response on the matters relating to the Indian Health Service and foreign aid budgets.

Acting

Assistant Secretary Indian Affairs

Enclosure



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

AUG 4 1983

Honorable Barry Goldwater
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Barry:

I appreciate you sending me a copy of the letter you wrote to the President concerning the problems faced by many of our Indian people in this country.

I know that you are aware of the many statements that I have made during the past two and half years regarding the Federal government's past and present policies toward the Indian people. I have visited many Indian reservations; I have met with Indian organizations, tribes and Indian leaders and I have listened to their problems. Some of the statements that I have made about the problems they face have been mistaken to mean criticism toward the Indian people themselves when I never intended that. I have apologized publicly for any hurt I may have caused, but I did not and do not apologize for the message itself.

So, Senator, I mean to say that there is nothing in your letter with which I can disagree. Yours was a good letter. Because of your past work, admiration and personal caring for the Indian people, I know that your message is one of the heart and you wrote the letter because you genuinely care. The bureaucratic answer and the easy thing for me to say is that most of the problems you mention in your letter fall under the purview of the Indian Health Service which is not my responsibility. That in itself is not the point. The point is, what are we going to do about it?

Well, you sure do not need me to tell you that the Indian people have been testifying before Congress for years and years, yet their problems have not been corrected. I am sure that past Indian Commissioners, Assistant Secretaries and Interior Secretaries have related the plight and the need of the Indian people in testimony before Congressional Committees for many years, just as we have done. I do not believe there has ever been an Interior Secretary in the past that has personally devoted as much time and energy as I have toward the problems faced by our Indian people. I have done it because I, too, care and because I have the responsibility under the law as their trustee.

For too long the Federal government has dealt with Indian tribes with antiquated laws and policies that should have been updated and modernized long ago. President Nixon attempted to bring our policies in line with the times in 1970 with a policy of self-determination and self-government and it has done much good. True, there has been more rhetoric than action for the past ten years, but even that is an improvement when you consider our policy for 200 years before that was one of total paternalism toward Indians. No one ever asked them what they wanted, they were just told -- and usually by a non-Indian bureaucrat on the reservation.

We took a giant step toward updating and modernizing our thinking and our policies when we selected Ken Smith -- a Wasco Indian who was General Manager of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Oregon -- as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. Ken is the first Indian who came directly from an Indian reservation to ever head Indian Affairs in Washington. He served for 12 years as that tribe's general manager and for 10 years prior was in various other positions with the tribe. It is the only place he has ever lived or worked other than the four years he was away at college. Ken attended BIA boarding school; he grew up on the reservation and saw first hand -- and later helped to solve -- many of the problems of the kind you talked about in your letter. I do not know of a person more qualified for this job from the standpoint of having been there than Ken Smith.

At mine and the President's direction, it was Ken Smith who took the lead in formulating the Indian Policy that the President issued earlier this year. Much of Ken's thinking, his ideas and philosophies went into that policy. It was drafted only after considerable input by Indian leaders throughout the country. And I personally know that President Reagan accepted, embraced and supported the policy before it was issued. I am sworn to implementing the policy.

As you know, the policy contains no recommendations for new or additional monies for Indian reservations. It does create a Presidential Advisory Commission on Indian Reservation Economies. I do not think that money in itself is the answer to the problems on reservations. We have too many examples -- and not just in Indian Country -- that throwing money at a problem does not solve it. I do not have to remind you that the Great Society programs of the 60s did little to "cure" poverty in this country. It was a "good idea" but it did not work.

I believe we are on the right road. I believe that self-determination and self-sufficiency is the answer, but we have to mean it when we say it. We have to say it again, and again and again. We are providing the tools to equip the Indian people with these two ingredients through new initiatives and new programs. Congress did not fund our new programs to the extent we requested in FY 1983, but it is a beginning. We are providing the Indian people an avenue to decide their own futures without the all-knowing "BIA" telling them or making their own decisions for them. Until the Indian people themselves gain the know-how, the desire and the money to run their own programs and provide for themselves, we are always going to have the problems to which you refer. They are always going to have some Federal funds the same as other governments -- city, county and state -- but they must face the fact that those funds are going to be less than what we now are able to provide.

Honorable Barry Goldwater

3

I know that you are aware by now at this point in this letter, that I have not addressed all of the problems you refer to in your letter. But I hope you do realize that we are attempting to address many of them and as we continue to fully implement the President's policy of last January that we will hopefully address and correct more of those problems. I know you are aware too that one of the big obstacles is changing the thinking of many of the "old-line bureaucrats" that have been in government doing things one way for many, many years, perpetuating their paternalistic thinking and their own careers. Even many of the tribes themselves have totally depended on that paternalistic thinking to exist. We may be a long time in changing some of that, but we are trying.

Thank you for taking the time to sit down and put your thoughts on paper and for sending me a copy. I look forward to working with you for many more years in helping to correct many of the problems in Indian Country.

Sincerely,

JIM

SECRETARY