



OSAGE NATION CONGRESS  
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MEMBER OF CONGRESS  
ELI POTTS  
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6/10/2020

To the Osage People,

I am saddened to hear that the Standing Bear administration has unilaterally chosen to close the Nation's Head Start facilities without consulting Congress.

The rumors of closure were brought to my attention by many concerned Osage constituents and parents.

I reached out to the Chief of Staff, the Director of Operations, the Members of Congress, and the Chief of the Nation- only to receive no substantive response from all levels of our government.

(the Chief of Staff indicated in a response that my inquiry was forwarded directly to the Chief of the Nation).

As the Chair of the Education Committee, I scheduled a meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> of June to discuss the potential closure of the Nation's Head Start facilities. Requests to the Director of Operations to have a representative appear at the meeting remain unanswered. At the meeting, Congressman BigHorse offered assistance in determining the fate of Head Start, but it appears the decision had already been made.

The Congress of the Osage Nation is well aware of the pending financial crisis.

This is a time for the Nation to utilize resources that bring in additional federal dollars, not turn them away.

Here are the facts: for every dollar the Nation spends on Head Start, we receive \$3.72 from the Federal government to better serve the students.

It can reasonably be assumed that by shifting many of these students to WELAs or Daposka Ahnkodapi, the Nation will be increasing costs and placing further financial demands on the Nation with no supplemental federal dollars, all while potentially disenfranchising students unnecessarily.

Osage Nation Head Start has served the Nation for over forty years. It is unfortunate that Head Start's future now depends on the *percentage* of Osage students served rather than to be measured by the success it provides to the entire community and the Osage Nation in general.

National studies have long shown the positive impacts of an accredited education option for parents in rural areas. The Osage Nation Head Start currently serves roughly 230 students, 57 of whom are Osage and 68 are Native students.

Head Start prepares students for success, is an accredited institution, and is a fully sustainable option that has long met and exceeded the educational needs of our students.

I intend to introduce legislation that will fund the Osage Nation Head Start for fiscal year 2021.

I do not wish to give the People of the Osage Nation false hope. However, I encourage you to voice your opinion. Our Constitution states that the Legislative Branch of government establishes the budget of the Nation. We have the financial resources to continue operating Head Start, it simply has to be a priority for the incoming 7<sup>th</sup> Congress- Call your Members of Congress.

For me, the question is simple- Why would the Nation turn away federal dollars in the middle of a financial crisis?

I hope the administration will reconsider this decision.

I further hope that Congress will come to fully understand the range of services provided to Osage students, non-Osage students, parents, grandparents, educators, and community leaders who rely on the operation of these Head Start facilities.

Please be safe and well.

Kind Regards,

Eli Potts  
Osage Nation Congress

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