

The Wichita and Affiliated Tribes

Amber Silverhorn-Wolfe
President

Tasha R. Mousseau
Vice President

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WT-25-81

RESOLUTION

Protecting the Bureau of Indian Education

- WHEREAS,** the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes (Wichita, Keechi, Waco, and Tawakoni) (the "Tribe") possess substantial inherent sovereign powers and have exercised those powers since time immemorial; and
- WHEREAS,** the Tribe has a duly established Tribal Government recognized by the Secretary of the Interior; and
- WHEREAS,** Article V of the Wichita Governing Resolution authorizes and empowers the Wichita Executive Committee of the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes to act in all matters of business on behalf of the Tribe; and
- WHEREAS,** The Wichita and Affiliated Tribe is a federally recognized Indian tribe with inherent sovereignty and the right to self-governance, as affirmed by treaties, federal laws, and judicial precedent; and
- WHEREAS,** The Wichita and Affiliated Tribes recognizes the importance of sovereignty and self-determination in education and reaffirms its commitment to ensuring Native students receive the best possible education; and
- WHEREAS,** the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) and Tribally Controlled Schools are responsible for ensuring the education, cultural preservation, and future success of Native students in federally funded schools across Indian Country; and
- WHEREAS,** the United States has a clear trust and treaty responsibility to Tribal Nations for the education of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children, as established through the U.S. Constitution and treaties, and reaffirmed in statutes, executive actions, and judicial decisions; and
- WHEREAS,** Congress has long understood its unique legal duty to Native students, reaffirming their political status through centuries of legislation, beginning with the Civilization Fund Act of 1819, codified as a Federal directive in the Snyder Act of 1921, and later revised under the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 (ISDEAA), P.L. 93-638, and the Tribally Controlled Schools Act of 1988, P.L. 100-297; and
- WHEREAS,** Executive Orders and policy decisions under the Trump Administration such as Executive Order (EO) 14191, "Expanding Educational Freedom and Opportunity for Families," and Executive Order (EO) 14210, "Implementing The President's 'Department of Government Efficiency' Workforce Optimization Initiative,"

have the potential to inadvertently undermine Tribal sovereignty, reduce funding for Native education, further reduce critical staffing levels; and disrupt the educational services at BIE and Tribally Controlled Schools; and

WHEREAS, nearly 48,000 Native students are currently enrolled in BIE-operated or Tribally Controlled Schools, which serve as the fulfillment of the federal government's trust responsibility to Indian education; and

WHEREAS, the chronic underfunding of BIE and Tribally Controlled Schools has historically limited the ability of Tribal Nations and the BIE to provide high-quality education options, impacting the future of Tribal Nations and Native students; and

WHEREAS, Congress established a school choice system for Tribal communities through the Tribally Controlled Schools Act of 1988 (P.L. 102-97), reinforcing Tribal self-determination and sovereignty in education; and

WHEREAS, Riverside Indian School, a Bureau of Indian Education operated boarding school located on the aboriginal homelands of the Kitikiti'sh (Wichita) people and serves approximately 800 students from nearly 75 Tribal Nations; and

WHEREAS, any development of new school choice programs for Native children must secure separate funding and programs, ensuring that existing funds dedicated to Tribally Controlled Schools and the BIE are not depleted or redirected to state education agencies, which would undermine Tribal sovereignty; and

WHEREAS, the current Indian School Equalization Program (ISEP), which funds the core operations of BIE and Tribally Controlled Schools, must remain intact and adequately funded to support Native students; and

WHEREAS, 168 of the 183 Bureau-funded schools are located in rural or remote areas with few, if any, viable alternative education options, making the stability of the BIE critical to Native students and their communities; and

WHEREAS, off-reservation boarding schools like Riverside Indian School, which are essential to many Native students, are directly operated by the BIE and serve students from multiple Tribal Nations without the protection of individual Tribal governance, making their continued operation and adequate funding particularly; and

WHEREAS, these off-reservation boarding schools are critical for students who have limited access to local education options but are often neglected and underfunded by federal policies, risking the further erosion of educational opportunities for Native students in these schools; and

WHEREAS, all Tribal Nations must be formally consulted before any decision-making process regarding the implementation of EO 14191 and EO 14210 to ensure that the Federal trust responsibility to Indian education is fully upheld; and

WHEREAS, the Federal government has a legal and moral obligation to formally engage in government-to government consultation with Tribal Nations on policies affecting Native education; and

WHEREAS, protecting BIE and Tribally Controlled School funding, resources, staffing levels, and Tribal control over education is essential to fulfilling the federal government's trust responsibility and ensuring Native students receive quality, culturally appropriate education; and

WHEREAS, the BIE Central Office and BIE leadership play a critical role in ensuring the effective administration, advocacy, and protection of BIE schools and Tribally Controlled Schools, and any efforts to weaken or dismantle BIE leadership jeopardize the future of Native education; and

WHEREAS, administrative staff, technical assistants, non-teacher staff, and adequate staffing levels are essential to keeping BIE and Tribally Controlled Schools open, funded, and running efficiently, ensuring that the schools can effectively serve Native students; and

WHEREAS, workforce reductions under EO 14210 pose a grave risk to the stability and effectiveness of BIE, Tribally Controlled Schools, and other federal programs serving Indian Country, threatening the delivery of critical services to Native students and communities.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes formally opposes any executive orders, budget cuts, workforce reductions, or policy changes, including those under EO 14191 and EO 14210, that would undermine the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), Tribally Controlled Schools, BIE Central Office, BIE leadership, adequate staffing levels, and Native student success; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes calls upon Congress and Federal agencies to uphold the Federal trust responsibility by maintaining and increasing BIE and Tribally Controlled School funding, supporting Tribal sovereignty in education, preserving staffing levels, and ensuring consultation with Tribal Nations before any policy changes affecting Native education; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes urges Congress and Federal agencies to ensure that BIE-operated schools and off-reservation boarding schools receive adequate funding, staffing, and resources to remain viable and effective, especially for those students who have limited access to local education options; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes strongly affirms its commitment to protecting the integrity of Tribally Controlled Schools, recognizing their vital role in supporting Native students through culturally relevant and community-centered education, and calls upon the federal government to fully fund and support these schools in perpetuity, ensuring they retain the autonomy and resources necessary to continue fulfilling their mission; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge OPM, alongside every Agency Head and Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) Team Lead, to ensure that employees whose functions are in service of fulfilling the trust and treaty obligations to Indian Country are exempted from this and future comprehensive actions towards workforce or federal funding reduction; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that OPM, OMB, and respective Departments and Agencies immediately conduct Tribal Consultation to understand the critical services provided to Indian Country and the grave impact these staffing changes will have; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes affirms its continued commitment to defending and strengthening the Bureau of Indian Education, Tribally Controlled Schools, and the educational rights of Native students, ensuring that all federal actions and policies fully uphold the rights, needs, and cultural values of Native communities.

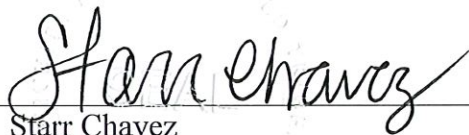
NOW THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes Executive Committee hereby authorizes President Amber Silverhorn-Wolfe or Vice President Tasha R. Mousseau in her absence, to sign this resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the Wichita Executive Committee of the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes of Oklahoma on **January 30, 2025**, in Anadarko, Oklahoma, by a vote of 5 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions, a quorum being present.

Attest:

Approved:



Starr Chavez
Secretary



Tasha R. Mousseau
Vice President