

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 23, 2010

Mrs. Carol Twedt
Chairperson
South Dakota Council of Juvenile Services
415 North Dakota Avenue
Sioux Falls, SD 57104-2412

Dear Chairperson Twedt:

Thank you for contacting me about juvenile justice on South Dakota's nine reservations. I appreciate hearing from you.

Addressing crime in Indian country continues to be a priority. Juvenile justice is of particular importance as corrections systems work hard to address problems beginning at a young age to prevent them from carrying on throughout adulthood. I understand the resource constraints many tribes face as they take on the task of fighting crime in their communities.

As you may know, on July 17, 2008, the U.S. Senate passed S. 2731, a \$50 billion foreign assistance authorization bill, which included my amendment that directs \$2 billion into the Emergency Fund for Indian Health and Safety. This Fund directs money toward critical public safety, health care, and water settlement needs in Indian Country. Although no money has been appropriated directly into the Emergency Fund, \$25 million has been appropriated as authorized by the Emergency Fund. I was pleased to learn that \$15 million went directly to tribal court and public safety programs.

Additionally, on July 29, 2010, President Obama signed the Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010 into law. The Tribal Law and Order Act provides for the appointment of special U.S. Attorneys who can ensure that violent crimes on reservations are prosecuted, improves the training programs for reservation police, empowers tribal courts to address crime by extending their sentencing authority, and improves the collection and reporting of data relating to crime in Indian Country.

Specifically, this legislation amends the Indian Tribal Justice Act to allow funds from the tribal justice system grant program to be used for court-appointed advocates for juveniles. By amending the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 this bill authorizes the Administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to include tribes in the local juvenile delinquency incentive grant programs. This change also requires grants to be awarded to tribes with the purpose of enhancing juvenile delinquency prevention and response services, care for juvenile offenders, and increasing the accountability of tribes in the prevention of juvenile delinquency. Although this is not a complete solution, I believe this bill is a positive

step toward addressing many unmet needs on our nations Indian reservations. In addition to my work on this bill, I have also requested that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) study tribal court systems and ways they can be improved. The GAO continues to make progress regarding their study and indicates that a report should be ready by the fall.

Many tribal communities in South Dakota, and across the nation, lack basic public safety resources. Unsafe schools and exposure to violence and drugs put students and families at a disadvantage. Additionally, businesses continue to struggle as important public safety needs are not met and quality of life in Indian Country continues to suffer. I appreciate your dedication to this important issue. As I continue my work in Congress, I will continue to look for ways to provide adequate resources to address juvenile justice issues on South Dakota's Native American reservations.

If you would like additional information on my activities in the Senate, please feel free to visit my website, <http://thune.senate.gov>. Thanks again for contacting me. Please keep in touch.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Thune", written in a cursive style.

JOHN THUNE
United States Senator

TIM JOHNSON
SOUTH DAKOTA

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Carol Twedt
Chairperson
South Dakota Council of Juvenile Services
415 N. Dakota Avenue
Sioux Falls, SD 57104-2412

Dear Carol:

Thank you for contacting me regarding the lack of juvenile justice resources for American Indians in South Dakota. I appreciate hearing from you about this important matter, and I apologize for the delay in responding to you.

Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) introduced the Tribal Law and Order Act (S. 797) on April 2, 2009. I was an original cosponsor of this legislation, which is designed to boost law enforcement efforts by providing tools to tribal justice officials to fight crime in their own communities, improving coordination between law enforcement agencies and increasing accountability standards. The measure encourages aggressive federal prosecution, increases the sentencing authority of tribal courts from one to three years, expands the authority of tribal police over crimes committed on Indian lands, provides tribes with direct access to national crime databases, and authorizes investments in existing programs that address and improve court systems, jails, and police forces. Additionally, the bill authorizes increased support of youth programs.

The full Senate, with my support, passed this bill on June 23, 2010. Representative Stephanie Herseth Sandlin (D-SD) introduced companion legislation, and the House of Representatives passed this legislation on July 21. President Obama subsequently signed the measure into law on July 29. I was proud to support this legislation, as I believe it is an important step forward in fighting violent crime on Indian reservations. The Tribal Law and Order Act will serve not only the treaty and trust obligations we owe to Indian people, but also our moral obligation to protect the safety of all Americans.

As a member of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee and the Appropriations Committee, I have consistently worked to secure sufficient funding for juvenile justice programs in Indian Country. Additionally, I have supported projects to provide recreational, after-school and enrichment programs to young people, thereby reducing the changes for them to enter our juvenile justice system in the first place. Our youth are our greatest asset, and I will continue to do all that I can at the federal level to promote juvenile justice programs that are effective and safe; it is critical to focus on prevention and to encourage young people to become productive members of their communities.

Thank you for contacting me, and please keep in touch!

Sincerely,



Tim Johnson

TPJ/ctu

