



The Honorable John Hoeven, Chairman
Committee on Indian Affairs
U.S. Senate
838 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall, Vice Chairman
Committee on Indian Affairs
U.S. Senate
838 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

*Re: Support for S.943, the Johnson O'Malley Supplemental Indian Education Program
Modernization Act*

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Vice Chairman Udall:

The Tribal Education Departments National Assembly (TEDNA) writes in support of S.943, the Johnson O'Malley Supplemental Indian Education Program Modernization Act. TEDNA is the national membership organization for the Education Departments, Divisions and Agencies of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) Tribes. Virtually all of TEDNA's members and the tribal students that they serve are assisted by or eligible for assistance from Johnson O'Malley (JOM) programs around the country.

For over 80 years, Congress has provided JOM funding for hundreds of thousands of AI/AN students in K-12 schools. Today, JOM is a well-established supplemental program intended to meet eligible AI/AN students' specialized and unique educational needs. While JOM programs, services, and activities generally are defined by federal law and regulation to include such things as academic support, teacher support, transportation, and school supplies, they also are tailorable to meet the specific needs of students, families and communities at the local level.

JOM funds flow from the U.S. Department of the Interior annual appropriations to states, public school districts, tribes and tribal organizations, and some tribal schools. Like many federal education programs, JOM funding is based on a set formula, which includes a determination of eligible students. But unlike other federal education programs, the student count for JOM funding has been frozen for decades – the Bureau of Indian Affairs last determined eligible JOM students in 1995. The over-20-year-old count of 278,000 students is well under half of the K-12 AI/AN student population of almost 800,000 as reflected in the 2010 Census. TEDNA knows of no other federal education program that has endured such disparity and inequity primarily due to outdated and inaccurate basic information maintained by a federal agency.

Administrative and other efforts to address this unacceptable situation have failed. S. 943 would correct the JOM program's incongruence and injustice by "directing the Secretary of the Interior to conduct an accurate comprehensive student count for the purpose of calculating formula allocations for [JOM] programs." TEDNA unequivocally supports immediate passage of S. 943 as the legislative solution to the full participation of AI/AN students in the schools they attend.

Very Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gloria E. Sly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gloria Sly
President of TEDNA

Cc Secretary Ryan Zinke, U.S. Department of the Interior
Tony Dearman, Director, Bureau of Indian Education
Carla Mann, President, National Johnson O'Malley Association
Yatibaey Evans, President, National Indian Education Association
Brian, Caldoosby President, National Congress of American Indians