



# NAVAJO NATION WASHINGTON OFFICE *WÁSHINDOON BAAHANÉ*

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750 First Street NE Ste 1010, Washington DC 20002 ♦ Phone 202.682-7390 ♦ Fax 202.682-7391 ♦ Website: <http://www.nnwo.org>

## \*\*\*\* LEGISLATIVE ALERT \*\*\*\*

### Head Start Reauthorization Bill Passes House

Late Wednesday, May 2, 2007, the Head Start Act Reauthorization legislation, H.R. 1429 was passed in the House by a large vote (365-48). Prior to floor debate, a troubling amendment was defeated in the Rules Committee that would have prohibited teaching of native languages in Head Start schools. The House passed version of H.R. 1429 contains the following relevant provisions regarding Indian Country:

- **Indian Head Start set aside is increased to a 3.5% level.** This is an increase from the current 2.7% level. The language will partially redress HHS budget maneuvers over the last few years that have deprived Indian Head Start of funding. This increase is temporary pending a study by the Secretary, who can then reset the amount. Tribes do not want the Secretary to have that discretion.
  1. **Government-to-Government procedures will be utilized to address underperforming Indian Head Start programs.** These procedures assure that tribal sovereignty is respected and that appropriate efforts are made to ensure that Indian Head Start programs are run by Native communities themselves.
- **Provides flexibility if an Indian Head Start program that have both Head Start and Early Head Start to move funds between the two in response to population fluctuations.** Smaller communities will have more flexibility to effectively target Head Start dollars.
- **Authorizes a Partnership/grant program between Tribal Colleges and Head Start programs.** Tribal Colleges and Universities have been doing an outstanding job on the front-lines of Native education. This program would allow that expertise to be more fully accessible to the Indian Head Start community.
- **Authorizes the Secretary to make payments for the purchase of facilities for Tribal programs that lack suitable facilities.** Many tribal programs operate in sub-standard facilities with few options on remote reservation lands. This provision will help in assuring adequate facilities.
- **Indian Head Start Representatives now included on State Early Learning Councils.**

The Senate version of the Head Start Reauthorization, S. 556, is likely to go to the Senate floor in the next few weeks. Currently the bill is in the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions.

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