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HEALTH CARE PANEL PARTICIPATES IN LISTENING SESSION WITH NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

Recommendations to be considered by Congress, White House

Washington, D.C. – The Citizens' Health Care Working Group and the National Congress of American Indians will participate in a listening session on health care in America on **Sunday, February 26th**, from 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm. This session is part of the more than 30 community meetings being held nationwide which engages citizens in a dialogue on the health care system in America. The meeting will be held at the Wyndham Hotel, 1400 M Street, NW, Sherwood Room, Washington, DC 20005. The meeting is free and open to the public.

"Health issues in Indian Country have been and continue to be of critical importance to the National Congress of American Indians and its legislative agenda. We will continue to work with tribal leaders, the federal government and members of Congress to improve the health and quality of life for Indians throughout the nation," said NCAI First Vice President and Lt. Governor of the Chickasaw Nation Jefferson Keel.

The community meeting will feature a multimedia presentation that provides information on the nation's health care system including problems related to cost, quality, and access to care. This will be followed by more focused discussions. Participants will share their ideas about how to improve the health care system.

"As the member appointed to the Citizens' Health Care Working Group to represent consumers, I think it is important to hear from all Americans including our nation's original Americans. Congress has asked us to deliver a plan for a better health-care system that works for all Americans. To accomplish this mission we must strive to listen to every voice," said Working Group member Montye Conlan.

Tribal members, especially those unable to come to the meeting are urged to take advantage of several important online features designed to overcome physical and practical barriers to citizen participation. The Public Comment Center, Citizens' Blogs, and Discussion Forums, are found at www.citizenshealthcare.gov. They are all ways to enable a more inclusive public comment and debate so that Native Americans can share their opinions with one another and make their views known to the Working Group in order to strengthen the recommendations provided to the President and Congress.

The Working Group, a nonpartisan group authorized by the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003, is charged with listening to the views of the American people and developing recommendations for the President and Congress to provide U.S. citizens with "Health Care that Works for All Americans." The *Health Report to the American People*, was released in October and serves as a basis to engage the American people in a dialogue on health care access, cost and quality issues. The Working Group consists of 15 members --14 citizens of diverse backgrounds from across the country, and the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

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