



**Sowers of Justice**

Catholic Legislative Network

**Action  
Alert**

***Ask Senators Klobuchar and  
Coleman to Reauthorize the  
Indian Health Care  
Improvement Act!***

**January 17, 2008**

**Background:**

In treaties negotiated during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Indian Tribes ceded over 400 million acres of land in exchange for health care for their people. The Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA), first signed into law by President Gerald Ford in 1976, is the current vehicle for meeting the promises of these past treaties. The United States has a longstanding legal responsibility to provide health care services to American Indians and Alaska Natives.

While the IHCIA continues to provide health care, it is in need of reauthorization. It is customary for Congress, through the reauthorization process, to take a fresh look at major laws every 5-7 years to update, modernize and refresh them. It has been 14 years since the IHCIA has been reauthorized. IHCIA reauthorizations have been introduced in the last three Congresses, however, none have passed.

The current state of American Indian health:

- Infant mortality rate is 150% greater for Indians than that of Caucasian infants
- Indians are 2.6 times more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes
- Life expectancy for Indians is nearly 6 years less than the rest of the U.S. population
- Suicide for Indians is 2 1/2 times higher than the national average
- There are fewer mental health professionals available to treat Indians than the rest of the U.S. population
- Healthcare expenditures for Indians are less than half of what America spends for federal prisoners

American Indians and Alaskan Natives, living in the most rural, isolated, and poorest areas of the country, deserve the opportunity to receive health care on the same basis as the U.S. general population. The IHCIA will be on the floor of the senate on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, and it is imperative that the senate passes the Act without weakening it through amendments.

**Recommended Action:**

Call Senator Coleman (202-224-5641) and Senator Klobuchar (202-224-3244)

Ask them to **vote to reauthorize** the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (S.1200) and **OPPOSE all amendments**. Tell them that as a person of faith, you expect to the United States government to live up to past promises and ensure quality health care for American Indians.

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