

Statement on the Reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act

March 23, 2010

Earlier today I signed into law the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, the health insurance reform bill passed by Congress. In addition to reducing our deficit, making health care affordable for tens of millions of Americans, and enacting some of the toughest insurance reforms in history, this bill also permanently reauthorizes the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, which was first approved by Congress in 1976.

As a Senator, I cosponsored this Act back in 2007 because I believe it is unacceptable that Native American communities still face gaping

health care disparities. Our responsibility to provide health services to American Indians and Alaska Natives derives from the nation-to-nation relationship between the Federal and tribal governments. And today with this bill, we have taken a critical step in fulfilling that responsibility by modernizing the Indian health care system and improving access to health care for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

NOTE: H.R. 3590, approved March 23, was assigned Public Law No. 111-148.

Statement on the Situation in Cuba

March 24, 2010

Recent events in Cuba, including the tragic death of Orlando Zapata Tamayo, the repression visited upon *las Damas de Blanco*, and the intensified harassment of those who dare to give voice to the desires of their fellow Cubans, are deeply disturbing.

These events underscore that instead of embracing an opportunity to enter a new era, Cuban authorities continue to respond to the aspirations of the Cuban people with a clenched fist.

Today I join my voice with brave individuals across Cuba and a growing chorus around the world in calling for an end to the repression, for the immediate, unconditional release of all political prisoners in Cuba, and for respect for the basic rights of the Cuban people.

During the course of the past year, I have taken steps to reach out to the Cuban people and to signal my desire to seek a new era in relations between the Governments of the United States and Cuba. I remain committed to supporting the simple desire of the Cuban people to freely determine their future and to enjoy the rights and freedoms that define the Americas and that should be universal to all human beings.

NOTE: The statement referred to Cuban dissident Orlando Zapata Tamayo, who died in prison on February 23 following a hunger strike; and *las Damas de Blanco*, a human rights group comprised of female relatives of Cuban political prisoners. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this statement.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Amendments

March 24, 2010

Dear Madam Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed

amendments to Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 proposals in my FY 2011 Budget. Included are amendments for the Departments of Agricul-