

Rep. Cole a key leader

Signing of Violence Against Women Act a victory for Indian women, tribes



U.S. Rep. Tom Cole, a Chickasaw, is joined by Indian women from across the country for President Obama's signing of the Violence Against Women Act reauthorization. Rep. Cole was a co-sponsor of the bill and a key House member in rallying support for the bill. The Act was signed by the President March 7 at the U.S. Department of Interior.

The Indian women of the U.S. won a huge victory March 7 when President Barack Obama signed the bill reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act.

The bill was signed by the President at the U.S. Department of Interior with a score of Indian women there in support. Also invited to the signing was the key Indian Congressman who was the driving force behind the new "teeth" in the bill - U.S. Rep. Tom Cole, a Chickasaw.

Rep. Cole, a Republican who represents Oklahoma's Fourth Congressional District, was a

co-sponsor of the bill.

"This victory is built on the goodwill the tribes have garnered over the years," Rep. Cole said. "And, we had an extremely compelling case to make."

Indian women had been suffering domestic abuse, sexual abuse and other assaults because the original Violence Against Women Act, passed in 1994, did not allow tribal law enforcement to intervene in Indian country cases in which one spouse or partner was non-Indian. This situation led to a feeling of helplessness - by tribal authorities and Indian women.

Prior to the March 7 signing, when tribal law enforcement agencies received information regarding attacks on Indian women by non-Indian men in Indian country, those agencies referred the cases to federal U.S. Attorneys' offices. Because of funding and prioritization issues, Rep. Cole said, those cases were routinely ignored.

"The U.S. AGs just couldn't keep up," Rep. Cole said. "The whole thing was not working."

The key was to establish immediate authority for tribal law enforcement when Indian and non-Indian spouses or partners were involved. That essential requirement, Rep. Cole said, brought about roadblocks.

Members of his own party in the House were uncomfortable with the bill in large part because they saw it as an unexpansion of tribal sovereignty. Those members wanted tribal authorities to receive authorizations from the U.S. Department of Justice before acting.

"That simply was not going to work," Rep. Cole said. "We had to make sure we allowed the local authorities to have control."

A consensus was built, he said, by explaining the fundamentals of the issue to Congressmen and proving how this bill was an effective use of

resources.

Finding allies in both House and Senate, Rep. Cole began building support across a wide geographic and philosophical landscape. Members from across the country came on board and, as Rep. Cole said, "did the right thing."

In February, the Senate passed an extension of the Violence Against Women Act by a vote of 78-22. In the House, the vote was 286-138 favoring the extension.

"This bill is a tremendous victory for each and every Indian woman in this country, as well as for the tribes themselves," Gov. Bill Anoatubby said. "Many, many Indian women, with the assistance

of Tom Cole, have fought long and hard for this critically important piece of federal legislation."

For all Indian people, the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act sends a clear message of compassion for Indian women, and a commitment to tribal sovereignty.

"Sovereignty is the answer," Rep. Cole said. "The tribes have a keen interest in protecting their own citizens, and their citizens will receive better justice in the long run with this bill. So many Indian women have been passionate about this issue. It is a credit to them and their incredibly hard work that this bill has been signed."

CONTRIBUTED BY Times editor Tom Bolitho

About the Violence Against Women Act

The Violence Against Women Act was originally enacted in 1994. The Act provided \$1.6 billion for investigating and prosecuting violent crimes against women.

The Act was reauthorized in 2000 and again in 2005.

The U.S. Senate voted in 2012 to once again reauthorize the Act but the U.S. House passed its own measure with language that deleted several provisions, including one that granted enforcement authority to tribal

agencies in cases of non-Indian violence against Indian women in Indian country.

U.S. Rep. Tom Cole (R-Okla.) led the effort to convince conservative House Republicans to support the Senate language, including the granting of enforcement powers to tribes in cases of non-Indian violence against Indian women.

Reauthorization of the Act was signed by President Obama on March 7, 2013 at the U.S. Department of Interior.

Military care packages

The Chickasaw Nation distributes military care packages to individuals stationed away from their permanent residences.

The military care package distribution list is made up of Chickasaws, spouses of Chickasaws, Chickasaw Nation employees, spouses of employees and children of employees on active duty and stationed away from their permanent residences.

If you know men or women who fit the criteria and would like to add them to the military care package list, please contact Ms. Randi Payne at (580) 310-6451 or randi.payne@chickasaw.net.

Thank you for your assistance and for supporting our troops!

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Chickasaw Citizen

Chickasaw Foundation Annual T-Ball Tournament set for April 26-27 in Ada



The 5th annual t-ball tournament will be April 26-27, 2013 at the Kiwanis Baseball Park in Ada. This will be a double-elimination tournament and only the first 10 teams will be accepted. Entry fee is \$75 before April 1 and \$100 afterwards. The age cut-off date is January 1. Players must be 6 years old on or before December 31 to play.

Visit www.chickasawfoundation.org for updates.

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