



Kiowa Tribe

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Executive Branch

May 28, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KIOWA TRIBE MOVES FORWARD WITH COVID-19 PLAN TO TRIBAL MEMBERS

CARNEGIE, Okla. – The Kiowa Tribe Executive Branch continued its meeting with the Legislative Branch on Thursday, May 28, 2020. The discussion on the table dealt with issuing funds to tribal members per Legislators’ Agreement.

Two days earlier no collaborative agreement was ironed out on the \$19.5K from the US Treasury Coronavirus Relief Funds (CFR) to be used by the Tribe to cover any COVID-19 related expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency.

Anthony Asetamy, Kiowa Tribe Court Administrator moderated the meeting and read the two-page COVID-19 proposal prepared by the Executive Branch. Four out of seven legislators were present (which is enough for a quorum).

The Executive Branch’s proposed agreement outlined eight priorities that would best serve all seven districts. Much of the concern focused on District 7 where its members live all over the US who don’t qualify for many of the Tribe’s programs and services.

Much opposition came from District 4 Jesse Svitak who stood steadfast on giving all 14,108 tribal members \$1K. “Most people are under the impression based on the information being released by the Legislators through their social media platforms that we can spend the money on anything that we want. This is not the case. The use of the money is restricted to COVID-19 related expenditures,” confirmed Madame Vice Chair Rhonda Ahhaitty.

The Executive Spending Plan under the CARES Act would allocate and administer \$9.5 million of the total funds awarded to members living in all districts such as food vouchers, personal protective equipment (PPE), past due bills, rent assistance, funeral costs, elder assistance in vulnerable situations to encourage staying at home, assist students with online or home school requirements (to name a few).

Svitak remarked that this would not be voted on today. District 2 Legislator Mike Primus expressed, “the point is to get the help to the people who really need it, not to those who just want money.” Members of the Executive Branch acknowledged Mr. Primus’ statement.

District 3 Legislator Marilyn Bread explained that many of her constituents are elders and would not benefit from a lump sum payment and would be better served with programs and services.

District 7 Legislator Modina Waters said there is no way her nearly 6-thousand tribal member-at-large district can be served. She believes the Executive Branch's plan would help those in need the most.

No action was taken on the Legislator's behalf. The administration of these funds falls clearly within the responsibility of the Executive Branch. It is reasonable to assume that the federal government will eventually treat these funds as a grant and will assign a Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number to the award. A CFDA number is a five-digit number assigned in the awarding document to most grants and cooperative agreements funded by the Federal government.

Transportation and Roads Director Thomas LeBeau explained not everyone has suffered as badly as others through the pandemic such as himself and would not apply for any assistance. He pointed out many others would not apply as well which would allow for more tribal members to receive aid.

Chairman Komalty ended the meeting voicing that the Executive Branch will move on with its proposed plans to fully utilize the \$19.5M including the launching of the eight initiatives for tribal members outlined above with \$9.5M allocated specifically for tribal members.

Komalty firmly believes that tribal members are in direct need of assistance. "We can no longer delay this important plan to help our people. The Executive Branch of government will follow the strict guidelines that have been put forth by the federal government in the use of these funds. We will not shortchange our people in any way, shape, or form nor put the Tribe at risk because of a misinterpretation of the rules."

The Executive Branch has created a Needs Assessment Form that will be distributed to all members next week, and is in the process of establishing a response team to assist with the filling out of these forms as well as obtaining the documentation necessary to distribute these funds as quickly as possible. More specific details will be available next week once these processes are put into place.

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