Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians Press Release on Federal Shutdown

GTB urges both Republicans and Democratic partisans to compromise in the best interests of the United States Government, State governments and Tribal governments on the federal shutdown and to reestablish a functioning Federal Government by enacting a budget authorization bill. Tribal governments and State governments are both dependent on federal appropriations to operate Tribal and state administered federal funded benefits. It is incomprehensible that the richest democracy in the world is now embraced in a mutually destructive legislative partisan dispute over a Wall that imposes health, welfare, and safety costs on its citizens, and puts its citizens at unnecessary risk by creating multiple perilous unsafe conditions, economic losses to the real economy, diminishment of value added services, and indeterminate future negative consequences by voluntarily closing vital and necessary governmental services. We all fail as citizens of this great country over whether a Wall is erected when all citizens are held hostage to partisan rancor.

Representative government should not be mutually assured destruction. All people want homeland security. A major part of that homeland security is a functioning economy, government, and safety conditions which should be all governments’ priority. The shutdown diminishes this priority; compromise by the principals is necessary for this Wall standoff.

The GTB Tribal Government is a priority provider of services to its members in a wide array of areas. However, Tribal, State, and Federal Governments, in our federalist system of governance, are mutually interdependent in providing health, welfare, and safety services to our citizens based on payments in taxes, and in the case of Tribes, payments in land as established by Treaties between the Tribes and
the United States that form the inheritance of all citizens, whether Tribal members or not.

The deal was and is--- land for the Federal Government in exchange for services to the Tribes. The federal shutdown is a breach of this historic contract. But more than a breach of the historical bargain, the federal shutdown has real present life-threatening consequences to our Tribal members, who disproportionately and by necessity depend on Tribal operated programs for medical assistance, food, housing, policing and fire protection, conservation management, and educational services that are stopped or delayed as a direct result of the federal shutdown.

People will die because of the shutdown. The Tribe operates lifesaving, life-enhancing services in conjunction with, and dependent on, the Federal Government budget. Those vital services are slowly being discontinued and will eventually stop completely the longer the shutdown continues. Citizens’ lives are now more perilous because of the lack of services that are dependent on the federal budget. We urge an end to the federal shutdown.

Unlike previous federal shutdowns which provided more notice to Tribal and Federal Governments, the sudden Trump decision to shut down the Federal Government provided insufficient time for both the Federal and Tribal Governments to prepare accommodation measures in anticipation of the shutdown. Thus, as a result, our Tribal citizens are suffering additional loss and risk which will only grow in severity the longer this needless shutdown continues.

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