

PROPOSED INDIAN HEALTH CARE PROJECT

For many years, Indians in the United States have suffered to an extent incomprehensible to the average citizen, because of inadequate health care facilities and insufficient funding of facilities that are provided. The plight of Indian Americans is gravely documented in 1974 hearings before the Permanent Sub-committee on Investigations on Government Operations, of the United States Senate. Minutes of these meetings, chaired by Senator Henry Jackson, documented case after case of needless death and suffering by Indian Americans, because of long distances they must travel to reach Indian Health Service facilities, long waiting necessary at the IHS facilities due to understaffing, and refusal of non-indian facilities to offer ambulance or emergency care because of reimbursement problems. In addition, outmoded equipment and lack of equipment multiply the problems of correctly diagnosing and treating of disease by IHS medical personnel.

The document further points out that most IHS hospitals are in very old buildings (many of which are unsafe) and that 29 of the 51 IHS hospitals in the country cannot meet criteria for certification for approval with the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Hospitals.

Modernizing or replacement of these IHS facilities would cost enormous sums of money and in some instances would duplicate existing non-indian facilities nearby. The cost for modernizing or replacing these buildings would not begin to address the shortage of nurses, doctors, and equipment also needed.

These hospitals have few if any intensive care units, and some do not even have surgical suites.

The report also contains a multitude of testimony concerning many Indians