

Interior Dept

Remarks of Rep. Carl Albert (D-Okla)
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.
April 26, 1967

INTERIOR APPROPRIATION BILL

Mr. Chairman:

The \$64,000 item recommended by the Appropriations Committee for the Public Health Service Indian Hospital at Talihina, Oklahoma, will be used for the consolidation of shop space and for the construction of a new incinerator.

The Talihina hospital is located in the southeast corner of Latimer County in Southeastern Oklahoma. It was constructed in 1938 as a 237-bed general and tuberculosis hospital. At the present time there are 114 general hospital beds available.

The Talihina hospital is the primary health resource for many members of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians living in Southeastern Oklahoma. When this hospital was constructed in 1938, it was designated as a medical center for the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek and Seminole tribes.

It provides hospital service and medical care in a 16-county area in Southeastern and South Central Oklahoma. In 1960 there were over 10,000 Indians living within this area. These nearly 11,000 Indians are almost entirely dependent on this hospital for medical care.

The Public Health Service has proposed to convert the existing hospital into a 100-bed medical general and surgical hospital, and to consolidate and rearrange the existing space and existing facilities. Because of the many demands upon the Federal budget, it was decided that funds for the overall consolidation would not be requested this year. Extensive modernization and expansion of certain departments is going to be required to meet program needs which were not visualized when the hospital was built 30 years ago.

The \$64,000 in this bill will enable the Public Health Service to make a few of the most needed improvements at the hospital. Construction of the new incinerator is an almost absolute necessity if the hospital is to continue to function as it should. The consolidation of shop space will provide a more efficient and economical means of maintaining the existing structure with much more effective utilization of manpower and materials. This \$64,000 is the absolute minimum needed by this hospital and I sincerely hope it will not be eliminated from this appropriation bill.