

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JANUARY 4, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I have signed into law S. 1017, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act. My Administration is committed to furthering the self-determination of Indian communities without terminating the special relationships between the Federal Government and the Indian people.

The Congress is to be congratulated for its passage of this legislation. It will enhance our efforts to implement this policy of Indian self-determination.

Title I of this act gives the permanence and stature of law to the objective of my Administration of allowing -- indeed encouraging -- Indian tribes to operate programs serving them under contract to the Federal Government. Furthermore, with the passage of this act, Indian communities and their leaders now share with the Federal Government the responsibility for the full realization of this objective. It will be through the initiatives of Indian communities that the authorities provided in this Act will be implemented. I urge these communities to make the fullest possible use of them and pledge the support of this Administration.

In addition to making this kind of contracting a right, the act does much to make it feasible and practical.

For example, it authorizes the Bureau of Indian Affairs to make grants to tribal organizations to help them develop the abilities of potential workers -- through training and other means -- to operate these programs. At the request of the tribe, it also allows Federal employees who work in programs transferred to tribal operation to continue working without losing Federal fringe benefits, thus making it possible for the tribe to begin operation with a nucleus of experienced employees.

The granting authority provided in this act can also be used to strengthen tribal governments and tribally funded programs.

Title II, the Indian Education Assistance Act, amends the Johnson O'Malley Act to give the Indian community a stronger role in approving or disapproving the use of funds for children in public schools. It also provides for better planning in the use of these funds to meet the educational needs of the Indian students.

The enactment of this legislation marks a milestone for Indian people. It will enable this Administration to work more closely and effectively with the tribes for the betterment of all the Indian people by assisting them in meeting goals they themselves have set.

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