



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

October 2, 2023

**NOTICE: Proposed Amendments to NCAI Constitution**

Honorable Tribal Leaders and NCAI Membership:

I am writing this letter on behalf of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Executive Committee and as a follow-up to the letter dated September 12, 2023 (attached to this letter). In that letter, I provided information about two proposed amendments to the NCAI Constitution and am now providing an update on that information.

As you will recall, the September 12th letter stated:

Given the similar nature of the two proposed amendments to the NCAI Constitution, the Executive Committee—after consulting with the NCAI Parliamentarian—has reached out to the sponsor of each proposed amendment to see if they will consent to consolidating their proposals into a single proposed amendment. Combining the two proposals can only be done with the consent of both sponsors and *if* this takes place, another notice will go out with the new combined proposed text.

As indicated above, the sponsors of the two proposals (Eastern Band of Cherokee, Shawnee Tribe, and Ute Indian Tribe) were contacted and they chose to work together to ensure that their respective proposals did not contradict each other. The result was two modified proposed amendments to the NCAI Constitution that no longer seek to modify identical portions of the NCAI Constitution. Instead, each proposal now seeks to modify distinct portions of the NCAI Constitution as follows:

- Proposal #1: Proposes to amend Article II(B)(1)(d) and Article II(B)(4)
- Proposal #2: Proposes to amend Article II(F)(1)(c) and Article II(B)(2)

The two modified proposals are separate from one another and will be voted on separately. You can access the modified proposals here: [https://ncai.org/about-ncai/ncai-governance/NCAI\\_Proposed\\_Constitutional\\_Amendments\\_-\\_Modified\\_-\\_2023.pdf](https://ncai.org/about-ncai/ncai-governance/NCAI_Proposed_Constitutional_Amendments_-_Modified_-_2023.pdf).

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**PRESIDENT**

**Fawn R. Sharp**  
Quinault Indian Nation

**1ST VICE PRESIDENT**

**Mark Macarro**  
Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians

**RECORDING SECRETARY**

**Stephen Roe Lewis**  
Gila River Indian Community

**TREASURER**

**Shannon Holsey**  
Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians

**REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENTS**

**ALASKA**

**Mike Williams**  
Akiak Native Community

**EASTERN OKLAHOMA**

**Norman Hildebrand**  
Wyandotte Nation

**GREAT PLAINS**

**Ryman LeBeau**  
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe

**MIDWEST**

**Rebecca Crooks-Stratton**  
Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community

**NORTHEAST**

**Lance Gumbs**  
Shinnecock Indian Nation

**NORTHWEST**

**Melvin Sheldon, Jr.**  
Tulalip Tribes of Washington

**PACIFIC**

**Jack Potter**  
Redding Rancheria

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN**

**Jennifer Finley**  
Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes

**SOUTHEAST**

**Reggie Tupponce**  
Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe

**SOUTHERN PLAINS**

**Genzo Flores**  
Lipan Apache Tribe of Texas

**SOUTHWEST**

**J. Michael Chavarria**  
Santa Clara Pueblo

**WESTERN**

**Bernadine Burnette**  
Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**Larry Wright, Jr.**  
Ponca Tribe of Nebraska

**NCAI HEADQUARTERS**

1516 P Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20005  
202.466.7767  
202.466.7797 fax  
www.ncai.org



## NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

For additional information about how debate will be conducted on the proposed amendments—including how to submit written comments on the proposed amendments—as well as how the voting process will be conducted, please see the September 12th letter (attached).

On behalf of NCAI, thank you for your continued support and involvement with the organization. This year's Annual Convention & Marketplace will be critically important for NCAI's future and we look forward to seeing all of you in New Orleans in November.

Siokwil,

Fawn Sharp  
President, National Congress of American Indians



# NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

September 12, 2023

## **NOTICE: Proposed Amendments to NCAI Constitution**

Honorable Tribal Leaders and NCAI Membership:

As you are likely aware, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) will be hosting its 80th Annual Convention & Marketplace from November 12-17, 2023, in New Orleans, Louisiana. I am writing to inform you that in addition to the typical business of the Congress—including elections of NCAI leadership—the upcoming Convention will include a vote on proposed changes to the NCAI Constitution.

### **I. Process for Proposing Amendments to the NCAI Constitution**

Pursuant to Article VII of the NCAI Constitution:

*This Constitution may be amended by a two thirds (2/3) vote of the total registered tribal and individual members at the Annual Convention. Proposed amendments must be submitted to the national NCAI office not later than three months prior to the Annual. All proposed amendments shall be submitted by the national office to the membership no later than two months prior to the Annual Convention. Before forwarding, the Executive Committee may review proposed amendments and make recommendations to the membership regarding whether the amendment is in order and promotes the purpose of NCAI to advocate for the interests of all tribes. Consideration of Constitutional amendments shall take priority over any other business during Constitutional Conventions.*

In accordance with this provision, the national NCAI office received two (2) separate proposals to amend the NCAI Constitution at the 2023 Annual Convention.



## NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The Executive Committee reviewed both proposals independently and determined that both proposed amendments were in order (i.e. both proposed amendments were properly received by the national office “not later than three months prior to the Annual”) and has chosen to not make any recommendation on whether the proposed amendments promote “the purpose of NCAI to advocate for the interests of all tribes.”

### **II. Substance of Proposed Amendments to the NCAI Constitution**

The text of the two proposed constitutional amendments to the NCAI Constitution (including the letter that accompanied each proposal) will be available on the NCAI website at:

<https://www.ncai.org/events/2023/11/12/80th-annual-convention-marketplace>.

Given the similar nature of the two proposed amendments to the NCAI Constitution, the Executive Committee—after consulting with the NCAI Parliamentarian—has reached out to the sponsor of each proposed amendment to see if they will consent to consolidating their proposals into a single proposed amendment. Combining the two proposals can only be done with the consent of both sponsors and *if* this takes place, another notice will go out with the new combined proposed text.

### **III. Process for Debating Proposed Amendments to the NCAI Constitution**

Creating space for debate on any changes to the NCAI governing documents is, of course, critical. Given the scope and substance of the proposed changes, there are undoubtedly many issues to consider and many Tribal Nations and individual members will wish to weigh in on the matter. In the interest of balancing the need for debate with the logistical realities and time limitations of the NCAI Annual Convention, the NCAI Executive Committee has decided on the following processes to assist in having a robust, respectful, and full debate of the issue:

- **Debate at the Annual Convention.** The NCAI Executive Committee has reserved the full use of the General Assembly session on Tuesday, November 14, 2023—running from 8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. CST—for debate of the proposed amendments to the NCAI Constitution. The NCAI Executive Committee is continuing to work with the NCAI Parliamentarian to provide additional guidance on the structure for that debate and additional information will be forthcoming.



## NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

- **Debate Prior to the Annual Convention.** Even with an entire General Assembly session dedicated to debate, it will inevitably be difficult to allow everyone to speak on the issue who wishes to do so. Thus, the Executive Committee has authorized the creation of a webpage on the NCAI website to house formal written comments by NCAI members in good standing that either support or oppose one or both of the proposed amendments to the NCAI Constitution. Information on how NCAI members-in-good-standing can submit their comments for publication on the NCAI website can be found here: <https://forms.gle/FitxVxXhU5mUnRYT6>.

### IV. Process for Voting on Proposed Amendments to the NCAI Constitution

The Executive Committee—after consulting with the NCAI Parliamentarian—has authorized the vote on all proposed amendments to the Constitution to take place via secret ballot in conjunction with the NCAI leadership elections on Thursday, November 16, 2023. On that date, all NCAI members in good standing will be able to vote on the proposed constitutional amendments between 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. CST. As is the case with other votes, Tribal Nation members can send one delegate to cast a weighted vote on their behalf and all eligible individual members can cast their own non-weighted vote. Additional information about the election process will be provided by the NCAI Elections Committee in the upcoming weeks.

### V. Conclusion

In conclusion, NCAI thanks you for your continued support and involvement. This year's Annual Convention & Marketplace will be critically important for NCAI's future. In addition to conducting elections and debating the proposed amendments to the Constitution, there will be updates from federal partners and Native organizations, discussions on policy priorities, dozens of breakout session opportunities, and a chance for us to work together towards fulfilling NCAI's mission of defending tribal sovereignty. We look forward to seeing all of you in New Orleans this November, and to working with each of you in the coming years as we work collectively to advance the sovereignty of all Tribal Nations.

Siokwil,

Fawn Sharp

President, National Congress of American Indians