



TERRI McCORMICK

WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE

CHAIR, COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
VICE-CHAIR, COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH
COMMITTEE ON INSURANCE

56TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

March 17, 2005

Honorable Terry Musser, Chair
Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations
Room 11 West
State Capitol
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Representative Musser:

I have reviewed the four bill drafts circulated by Joyce Kiel, Senior Staff Attorney for the Legislative Council, for the upcoming meeting of the Working Group on Tribal Schools for the Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations on Friday March 18, 2005. Due to Friday's meeting being scheduled on a day in which I indicated I could not attend, I am expressing my concerns by letter regarding these bill drafts.

First, I believe that defining tribal schools as private schools without independent status may take away the "sovereign rights" of the tribes. The issues of funding non-tribal students, and autonomy of the schools have not been addressed in these drafts. As a private school, no funds are available on a per pupil basis. It is, I believe, the worst of both worlds – many pages of rules and regulations with no funding available. I caution the education work group to proceed slowly when giving up "sovereign rights" when they relate to educating children in tribal schools.

I am currently having drafted a bill that would allow for the creation of independent charter schools on tribal lands. These schools would be authorized through the College of the Menominee Nation in Keshena, WI. The system would be modeled upon the system in Racine County between UW-Parkside and the Racine public school system with the exception that the tribes would be allowed to establish multiple charter schools rather than just one. All mandates are waived in charter schools in exchange for a curriculum plan that provides for student achievement measurements as defined by the contract/ or charter designed by the tribal schools and the College of the Menominee Nation.

This bill will allow for schools to operate with self-determination and a release from all state mandates in exchange for a contract that outlines accountability for student performance. I hope that we can focus on the issues raised by the first meeting of the Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations including the issue of inadequate funding for non-tribal children and the need to preserve self-determination and control over curriculum and school governance.

I will be circulating my bill to all members of the committee as soon as it is drafted. I would welcome any discussion of the merits of the bill and proposed changes.

Sincerely,

Terri McCormick
State Representative
56th Assembly District

cc: Members of the Working Group on Tribal Schools
Members of the Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations