

TERRY MUSSER

WI STATE REPRESENTATIVE 92ND ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

To The Working Group on Tribal Schools for the Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations

From: Representative Terry Musser, Chair, Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations

March 4, 2005

Thank you for agreeing to assist the Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations by serving on the Working Group on Tribal Schools.

The Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin suggested that the Committee study and develop legislative proposals on two topics related to tribal schools: first, that the statutes be reviewed to provide treatment for tribal schools and tribal school pupils that is comparable to that provided to private schools and private school pupils; and, second, that state funding be provided to tribal schools. The Committee heard presentations on these topics at its October 19, 2004 meeting. I then asked Legislative Council Staff to work with interested individuals to develop recommendations for legislative proposals for the Committee to consider on these topics. I appreciate your willingness to participate in this effort.

So that you understand how your efforts fit in the overall scheme, I want to give you a little background information. The Special Committee is established by the Wisconsin Legislature's Joint Legislative Council, which appoints the Committee's members. There are currently ten public members (who were appointed after being nominated by a tribe) and eight state legislators. The Committee's task is to study issues relating to American Indians or American Indian tribes or bands in Wisconsin and then develop legislative proposals on these issues. The Committee then submits its legislative proposals to the Joint Legislative Council, which then votes on whether to introduce the Committee's proposals as legislation (in the form of a bill) for consideration by the Wisconsin Legislature. As you know, any bill could be passed, passed only after amendment, defeated, or vetoed by the Governor. Since your group will be making recommendations to the Committee, you can see that your efforts will be one of the early steps in a very long process. But, early steps are necessary to begin a journey.

The Working Group is scheduled to meet on March 18, 2005 at 9:30 a.m. in the Legislative Council Staff offices at Suite 401, One East Main St., in Madison. To facilitate discussion at the meeting, Legislative Council Staff will be preparing preliminary bill drafts for your review on the two topics suggested by the Menominee Tribe.

I will not be able to attend the meeting but have asked Legislative Council Staff to review the drafts with the group and revise the drafts to reflect the group's recommendations. Since this is an informal group, there will be no votes. I hope that the group will be able to reach a consensus on the matters you discuss and, if that is not possible, that the group will provide options for the Committee to further discuss. If you are not able to attend the March 18 meeting, I hope that you can send a designee or review the preliminary bill drafts and provide your comments to Legislative Council Staff.

The next meeting of the Special Committee is scheduled for April 15 at a location to be announced. (You will be provided with that information later.) One of the agenda items is a review of your group's recommendations. You are most welcome to attend that meeting.

Again, the focus of the March 18 meeting of the Working Group is to consider the two topics suggested by the Menominee Tribe about which the Committee has already heard presentations. If any of you think that additional issues relating to tribal schools should be considered by the Committee, please feel free to contact me so that we can discuss the matter.

I hope that you have a productive meeting and look forward to receiving your recommendations.