

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

**Rep. Collin Peterson Floor Statement regarding  
H.R. 1272, the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Judgment Fund Distribution Act  
June 18, 2012**

I rise today in support of H.R. 1272, the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Judgment Fund Distribution Act.

Thirteen years ago, the United States Court of Federal Claims awarded and appropriated \$20 million to the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. This settlement appropriation was to compensate the descendants of the Chippewa Indians of Minnesota for the improper valuation of timber and the taking of land under the Nelson Act of 1889. Now, because of the Indian Judgment Fund Act of 1983, Congress must pass legislation detailing how the settlement should be distributed among the six Bands that make up the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe.

The Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Judgment Fund Distribution Act, H.R. 1272, authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to release the funds plus interest earned that were appropriated into a trust for the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe in 1999. Being the expenses for prosecuting the Minnesota Chippewa Tribes claims were shared equally by all six Bands these expenses should be expended equally from the fund. H.R. 1272 requires each of the six Bands to provide the Secretary with updated membership rolls, directs the Secretary to set aside \$300.00 to each member enrolled, and then, divides the remaining funds into equal shares for each Band.

It is important to note that CBO has concluded that H.R. 1272 does not need an appropriation and has no budgetary impact because the \$20 million settlement proceeds were appropriated and paid to the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe in 1999.

I think it is high time that this settlement is finally distributed and put to work within these communities. The sooner we resolve this issue the sooner these funds can be released and go to work within these economically depressed areas. There is a great need on these Reservations for things like schools, health care facilities and infrastructure improvements.

In a perfect world I would have liked to see all six Bands be in unanimous agreement on how these funds should be distributed, we cannot allow the perfect to be the enemy of the good. We have been working toward a unanimous agreement for thirteen years now.

It makes no sense for anyone to draw a hard line position when, judging from experience, no hard line position has any chance of succeeding. It is time for everyone to come together and find an agreement that maybe not everyone will love, but everyone can benefit from.

Thank you and I yield back the balance of my time.

DISTRICT OFFICES