

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

1st Session of the 48th Legislature (2001)

SENATE CONCURRENT  
RESOLUTION 37

By: Fisher and Hobson of the  
Senate

and

Toure, Corn and Nations of  
the House

AS INTRODUCED

A Concurrent Resolution endorsing the Native American Language Act of 1990; encouraging the teaching and learning of Native American languages; opposing artificial barriers to teaching and learning Native American languages; urging measures to foster respect for Native American languages; and directing distribution.

WHEREAS, the Native American Language Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-477) enunciates the policy of the United States government to "preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop Native American languages"; and

WHEREAS, the State of Oklahoma is home to 39 tribes, members of which still speak 25 Native American languages. Until recently, Oklahoma had more Native American citizens than any other state. Their histories, cultures, and languages comprise a unique heritage that helps make our state great; and

WHEREAS, Native American languages are crucial to the identity, self-esteem, and success of young Native Americans. Many Oklahoma heroes have spoken Native American languages, and many Oklahoma youth would like to have the connection of a shared language with these heroes; and

WHEREAS, Native American history, culture, and language are so interrelated that when a language dies, it takes with it literature, oral history, song, and other important aspects of Native American cultural heritage. The pressures of modern American culture as expressed in television, radio, education, and public life have steadily decreased the attention paid to Native American languages by some Oklahomans; and

WHEREAS, our state values its great diversity of native culture, as evidenced by our state slogan, "Oklahoma - Native America". Native American languages are just as sophisticated and just as enriching to the lives of their speakers as are other languages; and

WHEREAS, linguistic and pedagogical studies have demonstrated that the cherishing of a people's language of heritage in no way threatens the status of the common language of most Oklahomans and of public discourse in Oklahoma; and

WHEREAS, one-third of all Oklahoma Native American languages have already become extinct in our state, and the remaining ones are all endangered; and

WHEREAS, the State of Oklahoma takes pride in the history and culture of Native American people as expressed in their traditional languages and considers these languages a treasured part of the heritage of our state and of the individual tribes of our state; and

WHEREAS, the State of Oklahoma seeks to preserve, protect, and promote our Native American language heritage.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE 1ST SESSION OF THE 48TH OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN:

THAT the Oklahoma State Legislature endorses and supports the policy of the United States government enunciated in the Native American Language Act of 1990 to "preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice and develop Native American languages".

THAT the Oklahoma State Legislature encourages the teaching and learning of Native American languages at all levels of instruction.

THAT the Oklahoma State Legislature opposes artificial barriers to the instruction or learning of Native American languages and encourages all education authorities to take all appropriate steps to promote and encourage the instruction and learning of Native American languages.

THAT the Oklahoma State Legislature urges the Superintendent of Public Instruction to take appropriate measures to foster respect for Native American languages and to vigilantly address any situations that may occur where proper respect for Native American languages is not provided.

THAT a copy of this resolution be distributed to the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Executive Director of the Intertribal Wordpath Society.

48-1-1069

THC

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