

Testimony
Public Safety and Transportation Committee
Wednesday, August 4, 2010
North Dakota Department of Health

Good afternoon, Chairman O'Connell and members of the Public Safety and Transportation Committee. My name is Tom Nehring, and I am the director of the Division of Emergency Medical Services and Trauma for the North Dakota Department of Health. I am here today to provide an update regarding emergency medical services in Rolette County.

We have been addressing two main issues regarding emergency medical services in Rolette County:

- 1) First, some concern has been raised whether or not the Belcourt Ambulance Service is in compliance with licensing rules in North Dakota. The Department of Health's review indicates the ambulance service is in compliance.
- 2) Second, the other two ambulance services in Rolette County have reported difficulty receiving reimbursement from the Indian Health Service (IHS) for ambulance services when an enrolled tribal member calls for an ambulance outside the geographical borders of the reservation.

It has come to our attention that the IHS instructs tribal members who are outside of the reservation boundaries to call the Belcourt Ambulance, which is on the reservation, when an ambulance is needed. This creates a conflict because state law requires the 911 dispatch to send the closest ambulance. If the responding closest ambulance is not the Belcourt Ambulance, it will often have little chance for reimbursement from IHS.

To address this issue, the Department of Health has had meetings and/or discussions with the following individuals:

- Mr. Ron Galloway – Indian Health Service
- Ms. Rebecca Loving – Interim Administrator – Belcourt Hospital
- Mr. Mike Roussin – Ambulance Supervisor – Belcourt Ambulance
- Mr. Darin Wellander – Ambulance Supervisor – Rolla Ambulance
- Ms. Tammy Wentz – Ambulance Supervisor – Rolette Ambulance
- Ms. Starr Klemetsrud – Supervisor – Lake Region 911
- Ms. Valorie McCloud – Auditor – Rolette County
- Mr. Scott Davis – Executive Director – North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission

I am pleased to report that we have made progress; for example, interest has been expressed concerning a mutual aid agreement for ambulance services in the area, which would help to ensure reimbursement from IHS for services provided. We are committed to holding additional meetings and dialogue until the issues in this region have come to a fair conclusion.

This concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.