

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

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**Governor Bullock Issues An Executive Order Establishing A State Office Of
American Indian Health**

Helena, Mont. – Today, Governor Steve Bullock signed an Executive Order to create the Office of American Indian Health at the Montana Department of Health and Human Services during the closing of the Tribal Leaders' Summit. Bullock was joined by tribal leaders from across the state who were in town for the annual Montana Tribal Leaders' Summit.

"It is unconscionable that some Montanans see their health outcomes dramatically downgraded because they're Native American," Bullock said of the executive order. "This order will ensure that Montana is taking the lead in finally addressing these disparities and improving the health of all residents of our state."

The Office of American Indian Health will focus on identifying specific factors contributing to health disparities and strategies DPHHS will pursue to address them. The office will work closely with other state agencies to reduce health disparities, meet directly with tribal leaders, urban Indian health centers, and other key individuals committed to reducing health disparities in Indian Country. Through direct communication with tribal representatives, the Office of American Indian Health will develop a list of eligible state programs accessible to tribal health programs, and provide annual updates on their actions and the progress made in reducing disparities in American Indian Health.

The average life span for American Indians in Montana is 20 years shorter on average than non-Indian Montanans. Native Americans are significantly more likely to suffer from cardiovascular disease, cancer, and respiratory illness. The current health care system in Indian Country limits access to preventative care and quality health care services and providers. The state and a coalition of tribal health care directors have committed to being active partners in addressing health disparities. By addressing these health disparities, Montana's families, communities, and economy will be strengthened.

Bullock has made expanding and improving health access a priority. Earlier this year, Bullock signed the HELP Act into law. It will bring Montana taxpayer dollars back to the state to expand health access to up to 70,000 Montanans, including 20,000 Native Americans.

In addition to this law, Bullock also championed a number of pieces of legislation to improve economic development opportunities in Indian Country, including bills to provide state recognition to tribally organized businesses, expand access to capital, and continue to support the Indian Country Economic Development grant program.

The executive order can be found at:

<http://governor.mt.gov/Portals/16/docs/2015EOs/IndianHealthEO.pdf>

PHOTOS: [1](#), [2](#)

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