

**RESOLUTION OF THE TOHONO O'ODHAM LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**  
**(Reaffirming Nation's Opposition to the Indian Health Service Strategic Realignment's**  
**Proposed Action to Close the Tucson Area Office and Merge It with the Phoenix Area Office)**

**RESOLUTION NO. 26-141**

1 **WHEREAS,** the Constitution of the Tohono O'odham Nation ("Nation") vests the Legislative  
2 Council with the authority to "promote, protect and provide for public health,  
3 peace, morals, education and general welfare of the Tohono O'odham Nation and  
4 its members" and to "consult, negotiate and conclude agreements and contracts  
5 on behalf of the Tohono O'odham Nation with Federal, State and local  
6 governments and other Indian tribes . . ." (Constitution, Article VI, Section 1(c)(2)  
7 and Section 1(f)); and

8 **WHEREAS,** the Constitution also vests the Legislative Council with the authority to "consult  
9 with the Congress of the United States and appropriate federal agencies  
10 regarding federal activities that affect the Tohono O'odham Nation and all  
11 federal appropriation estimates and projects for the benefit of the Tohono  
12 O'odham Nation before such estimates and projects are submitted to Congress  
13 and other federal agencies" (Constitution, Article VI, Section 1(j)); and

14 **WHEREAS,** on June 13, 2025, the Indian Health Service ("IHS") provided a Dear Tribal Leader  
15 Letter initiating tribal consultation on the proposed strategic realignment of the  
16 Indian Health Service and initiated a second round of consultations on November  
17 13, 2025; and

18 **WHEREAS,** the initial proposed strategic realignment of the Indian Health Service did not  
19 include specifics or a detailed plan and the Nation submitted comments in  
20 response to that effect pursuant to Resolution No. 25-253; and

21 **WHEREAS,** the second round of IHS strategic realignment tribal consultations includes a  
22 proposal to close the Tucson Area Office ("TAO"), the only IHS area office that  
23 would be eliminated and merged with the Phoenix Area Office, without ever  
24 engaging in good faith direct consultation with the Nation or other Area tribes;  
25 and

26 **WHEREAS,** the Nation strongly opposes the closure of the Tucson Area Office and stated the  
27 Nation's position in written comments approved by Resolution No. 26-059 and  
28 submitted to IHS; and

29 **WHEREAS,** previous attempts to close the Tucson Area Office faced the same strong  
30 opposition by the Nation based upon the direct and negative impacts to the  
31 Nation and Nation's members and also based upon the important role of the

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1                    **Tucson Area Office as the Office of Health Program Research and Development**  
2                    **prior to being designated as the Tucson Area Office; and**

3 **WHEREAS,**        **closure of the Tucson Area Office will result in \$5 million dollars of service**  
4                    **reductions to the Nation and other Area tribes as the amounts that support all**  
5                    **eighteen (18) TAO Residual positions and twenty-two (22) Environmental Health**  
6                    **Support & Facilities Support positions and Sanitation Facilities Construction**  
7                    **positions, all of which have always served the Tucson Area only and therefore**  
8                    **should be fully compactible, will disappear and likely be folded into IHS**  
9                    **Headquarters or another Area Office, resulting in disparate and discriminatory**  
10                  **treatment when compared to tribes that have already compacted or contracted**  
11                  **these programs; the Nation and other Area tribes will also be deprived of the**  
12                  **unspent funds the TAO regularly transfers to the Nation and other Area tribes at**  
13                  **the end of each year; and**

14 **WHEREAS,**        **elimination of the TAO will also result in sanitation facilities planning,**  
15                    **maintenance, and compliance services no longer being directly available to the**  
16                    **Nation, effectively eliminating a contractible program authorized under 25 U.S.C.**  
17                    **§ 1632 which is essential to public health; expecting the Nation to absorb these**  
18                    **federal responsibilities without a corresponding transfer of resources is**  
19                    **inconsistent with the federal trust responsibility and the principles of tribal self-**  
20                    **determination; and**

21 **WHEREAS,**        **the Nation relies heavily on IHS Area-level information technology ("IT") staff for**  
22                    **critical assistance related to electronic health records, cybersecurity**  
23                    **compliance, network infrastructure, and system outages; the removal of this**  
24                    **local expertise, without providing the Nation the resources to replace it, will**  
25                    **result in delayed response times, potential miscommunication, and service**  
26                    **interruptions thereby directly jeopardizing patient care, data security, and**  
27                    **compliance with federal health information requirements; and**

28 **WHEREAS,**        **elimination of the TAO will result in fewer seats and inequitable and diminished**  
29                    **representation for the Nation and other Area tribes on federal advisory councils,**  
30                    **workgroups, and committees thereby weakening the government-to-**  
31                    **government relationship and undermining tribal participation that is governed**  
32                    **by the Federal Advisory Committee Act, 5 U.S.C. § 1001 *et seq*; this loss of**  
33                    **representation is deeply concerning as advisory councils are one of the primary**

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1 mechanisms for tribal input into federal health policy, budget formulation, and  
2 program priorities; and

3 **WHEREAS,** the Nation formally requests that IHS: (1) suspend implementation of the TAO  
4 closure; (2) engage in meaningful government-to-government consultation  
5 directly between IHS leadership and the Nation, not part of a nationwide  
6 consultation process; (3) transfer all funds associated with eliminated or  
7 relocated positions to the Nation and other Area tribes; (4) provide the Nation with  
8 the option to assume these functions under ISDEAA or other lawful mechanisms  
9 before any realignment or relocation occurs; and (5) preserve Sanitation  
10 Facilities Construction program funding, IT support, and advisory  
11 representation; and

12 **WHEREAS,** the Appropriations and Health and Human Services Committees, in the best  
13 interests of the Nation and Nation's members, recommend that the Nation  
14 reaffirm its strong opposition to the closure of the Tucson Area Office and merger  
15 with the Phoenix Area Office.

16 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Tohono O'odham Legislative Council reaffirms the  
17 Nation's strong opposition to the closure of the Tucson Area Office and merger  
18 with the Phoenix Area Office as proposed in the Indian Health Service Strategic  
19 Realignment.

20 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Tohono O'odham Legislative Council formally requests that  
21 Indian Health Service:

- 22 (1) suspend implementation of the TAO closure;
- 23 (2) engage in meaningful government-to-government consultation directly  
24 between IHS leadership and the Nation, not part of a nationwide  
25 consultation process;
- 26 (3) transfer all funds associated with eliminated or relocated positions to the  
27 Nation and other Area tribes;
- 28 (4) provide the Nation with the option to assume these functions under  
29 ISDEAA or other lawful mechanisms before any realignment or relocation  
30 occurs; and
- 31 (5) preserve Sanitation Facilities Construction program funding, IT support,  
32 and advisory representation.
- 33

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The foregoing Resolution was passed by the Tohono O'odham Legislative Council on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of APRIL 2026 at a meeting at which a quorum was present with a vote of 3,321.1 FOR; -0- AGAINST; -0- NOT VOTING; and [01] ABSENT, pursuant to the powers vested in the Council by Article VI, Section 1(c)(2) and Section 1(1) and (j) of the Constitution of the Tohono O'odham Nation, adopted by the Tohono O'odham Nation on January 18, 1986; and approved by the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs (Operations) on March 6, 1986, pursuant to Section 16 of the Act of June 18, 1934 (48 Stat.984).

TOHONO O'ODHAM LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

*Wavalene M. Saunders*

Wavalene M. Saunders, Legislative Chairwoman

16 day of April, 2026

ATTEST:

*Evonne Wilson*

Evonne Wilson, Legislative Secretary

16 day of April, 2026

Said Resolution was submitted for approval to the office of the Chairman of the Tohono O'odham Nation on the 16 day of April, 2026 at 10:15 o'clock, p.m., pursuant to the provisions of Section 5 of Article VII of the Constitution and will become effective upon his approval or upon his failure to either approve or disapprove it within 48 hours of submittal.

TOHONO O'ODHAM LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

*Wavalene M. Saunders*

Wavalene M. Saunders, Legislative Chairwoman

APPROVED

on the 17 day of April, 2026

DISAPPROVED

at 7 o'clock, A.m.

*Verlon M. Jose*

VERLON M. JOSE, CHAIRMAN  
TOHONO O'ODHAM NATION

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1 Returned to the Legislative Secretary on the 17 day of

2 April, 2026, at 8:22 o'clock, A.m.

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4  
5 *Yvonne Wilson*  
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7 **Yvonne Wilson, Legislative Secretary**

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**ACTION: REAFFIRMING NATION'S OPPOSITION TO THE INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE STRATEGIC REALIGNMENT'S PROPOSED ACTION TO CLOSE THE TUCSON AREA OFFICE AND MERGE IT WITH THE PHOENIX AREA OFFICE**

**Moved: COUNCILWOMAN VIVIAN JUAN-SAUNDERS**

**SECOND: COUNCILMAN DANIEL L.A. PRESTON, III**

**DATE: APRIL 10, 2026**

| DISTRICT             | LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVES                               | # OF VOTES     | FOR            | AGAINST    | NOT VOTING | ABSENT      |
|----------------------|---|----------------|----------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| SIF OIDAK<br>251.2   | 1. WAVALENE M. SAUNDERS<br>(Mary Lopez)                   | 125.6          | X              |            |            |             |
|                      | 2. FRANCIS HOMEWYTEWA<br>( )                              | 125.6          | X              |            |            | X           |
| SELLS<br>565.7       | 1. JANET B. ELEANDO<br>( )                                | 282.85         | X              |            |            |             |
|                      | 2. EVELYN JUAN MANUEL<br>(Juan Buendia)                   | 282.85         | X              |            |            |             |
| SCHUK TOAK<br>195.3  | 1. THEORIA CAMPILLO<br>(Rebecca Ann Valentine)            | 97.65          | X              |            |            |             |
|                      | 2. DELISA M. RAMON<br>(Quintin C. Lopez)                  | 97.65          | X              |            |            |             |
| SAN XAVIER<br>249.8  | 1. DANIEL L.A. PRESTON III<br>( )                         | 124.9          | X              |            |            |             |
|                      | 2. JANICE FELIX<br>( )                                    | 124.9          | X              |            |            |             |
| SAN LUCY<br>266.3    | 1. GLORIA M. RAMIREZ<br>(Lorraine M. Eller)               | 133.15         | X              |            |            |             |
|                      | 2. ROGER MANUEL (Absent)<br>(Christina Andrews) (Present) | 133.15         | X              |            |            |             |
| PISINEMO<br>240.3    | 1. PAMELA J. BENAVIDEZ<br>(Nora J. Ruclas)                | 120.15         | X              |            |            |             |
|                      | 2. NAOMI MONTE<br>(Edward D. Manuel)                      | 120.15         | X              |            |            |             |
| HICKIWAN<br>222.9    | 1. LOUIS R. LOPEZ<br>(Loretta A. Ortega)                  | 111.45         | X              |            |            |             |
|                      | 2. DELMA M. GARCIA<br>( )                                 | 111.45         | X              |            |            |             |
| GU VO<br>279.6       | 1. LESLIE LUNA<br>( )                                     | 139.8          | X              |            |            |             |
|                      | 2. BENNETT CHEWING<br>( )                                 | 139.8          | X              |            |            |             |
| GU ACHI<br>289.2     | 1. GLORIA JOHNSON<br>( )                                  | 144.6          | X              |            |            |             |
|                      | 2. LUCIUS E. LOPEZ<br>(Victoria A. Hobbs)                 | 144.6          | X              |            |            |             |
| CHUKUT KUK<br>361.9  | 1. MARLAKAY HENRY<br>( )                                  | 180.95         | X              |            |            |             |
|                      | 2. VIVIAN JUAN-SAUNDERS<br>(Cornelius Antone)             | 180.95         | X              |            |            |             |
| BABOQUIVARI<br>398.9 | 1. JESSE NAVARRO<br>( )                                   | 199.45         | X              |            |            |             |
|                      | 2. NED NORRIS, JR.<br>(Leander Mase)                      | 199.45         | X              |            |            |             |
| <b>TOTAL</b>         |   | <b>3,321.1</b> | <b>3,321.1</b> | <b>-0-</b> | <b>-0-</b> | <b>[01]</b> |