

TOM COLE  
4TH DISTRICT, OKLAHOMA  
  
COMMITTEES:  
ARMED SERVICES  
NATURAL RESOURCES

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-3604

PLEASE REPLY TO:

- 238 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
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- 2420 SPRINGER DRIVE  
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- 711 SW D AVENUE  
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- 104 EAST 12TH  
ADA, OK 74820  
(580) 438-5376

August 20, 2007

Casey Ross-Petherick

Dear Casey:

Thank you for contacting me regarding your opposition to H.R. 2824, a bill to sever United States' government relations with the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. I appreciate hearing from you on this important issue.

Representative Diane Watson introduced H.R. 2824 on June 21, 2007, and it was immediately referred to the House Natural Resources Committee and the House Judiciary Committee. As you may know, on March 3, 2007, the Cherokee Nation voted to not allow Cherokee Freedmen to be members of the Nation. This bill, among other things, severs all tribal-federal relations between the Cherokee Nation and the United States government and prohibits the Nation from gaming. This would take effect until the Cherokee Nation fully restores all rights of the Cherokee Freedmen as enrolled members of the Nation. As a sovereign nation, it is the Cherokee Nation's right to determine who is a member of their nation.

Frankly, I strongly support the right of Native American governments and tribes to determine their membership. Therefore, I will oppose H.R. 2824 should it come before the House for a vote. It is important to note a few key points. This issue is currently pending in both federal and tribal court. Therefore it would be premature and unwise to take any legislative action before judicial proceedings are complete. Secondly, this bill is a bad idea because it would cut off benefits for all Cherokees and Freedmen, hurting the very people Representative Watson wants to help. The Freedmen are receiving the full benefits of tribal membership while this issue is being litigated. And lastly, this type of legislation would set an extremely bad and dangerous precedent for tribal sovereignty. It should be the policy of Congress to allow each tribe to determine its own membership rules and rolls consistent with treaty obligations as interpreted by the courts.

Again, thank you for contacting me. I always appreciate hearing from my fellow Oklahomans on issues about which they are concerned. Your input helps me do a better job representing the people of the Fourth District of Oklahoma. If I may ever be of any assistance to either you or your family, please do not hesitate to contact me. I also encourage you to visit my website at [www.house.gov/cole](http://www.house.gov/cole) to keep up with what is happening in Congress, and to learn more about the services my office can provide to the citizens of Oklahoma.

Sincerely,



Tom Cole  
Member of Congress

PS Great to hear from you!