

**From:** [Roubideaux, Yvette \(IHS/HQ\)](#)  
**To:** [IHS ALL](#)  
**Subject:** Message from the Director: Presidential Inauguration  
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To: All IHS

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to attend events during the Inauguration of President Obama this past week and wanted to share a few pictures. My little zoom lens on my camera did a pretty good job even though I was shaking in the cold at the Swearing In ceremony.

As Director of the Indian Health Service, I felt like you all were there with me as we celebrated the 2nd Inauguration of our President and now are beginning four more years in this Administration that has been so supportive of Tribal issues, and specifically, so supportive of improving the Indian Health Service. Our budget has increased in the face of cuts in the overall federal budget, and our efforts to change and improve the IHS are resulting in real improvements: patients are getting Contract Health Service referrals paid beyond priority 1 in some facilities, our GPRA indicators show that more patients are getting preventive services, and our business operations are improving. While the list of accomplishments is long, it is important to acknowledge that there is still much more to do.

The Inauguration gives us a chance to think about what we have accomplished, and to prepare for what more we can do to improve care for the patients we serve. We are facing challenging times – the threat of sequestration, unknown budget levels, a changing health care marketplace, recruitment and retention challenges, travel restrictions, etc. However, I continue to be optimistic that we can face these challenges head on, use the talents and innovative ideas of all our employees to continue to make progress.

Change is an interesting process; some are eager and cannot wait to help with changes, and some are wary and resist change. You have probably seen this spectrum as we have made changes to our operations and our clinical care practices over the past few years. However, the point is that we are changing as an organization, and we must change because our patients and the Tribes we serve (and our staff) want us to change. I am so grateful for those of you who have embraced our priorities and who have helped us change and improve. For those of you who are still resisting change or not sure, I encourage to join the rest of us in what is a very exciting process – who would not want to do a better job at providing health care to our patients, who would not want to provide outstanding customer service, and who would not want to help us improve our business practices?

I get emails and comments all the time from staff who are excited about the changes that are taking place in this organization and I also hear about really exciting and innovative strategies our employees are using to make improvements. All of this in face of budget constraints and long lists of things to do in a day that is never long enough. But IHS employees have always risen to the challenges, and I so appreciate all of your efforts. I have started to hear that people are noticing that we are changing for the better – I hear compliments from Tribes and our patients. They tell me about what you have done to help them get quality healthcare. I still hear the complaints, but reports on improvements are becoming more common these days. One Tribal leader recently told me she could not believe how nice the staff were to her in the clinic (she had not visited the clinic for a few years) and the doctor actually walked with her to make sure she got to the pharmacy. Now that's the kind of change we are talking about!

The President's address at the inauguration challenged all of us to work together and take collective action. In his speech he said:

*"But we have always understood that when times change, so must we; that fidelity to our founding principles requires new responses to new challenges; that preserving our individual freedoms ultimately requires collective action. For the American people can no more meet the demands of today's world by acting alone than American soldiers could have met the forces of fascism or communism with muskets and militias. No single person can train all the math and science teachers we'll need to equip our children for the future, or build the roads and networks and research labs that will bring new jobs and businesses to our shores. Now, more than ever, we must do these things together, as one nation and one people."*

I know that we do better when we work as a team, respecting all members of the team for the unique set of talents and skills they bring to the table. So much of our work requires teamwork, and our outcomes are usually better when we work together. Our Improving Patient Care initiative, the one in which we are implementing the patient-centered medical home model, is an example of using the talents of everyone in our facilities to work as a team to ensure that our patients get timely, quality healthcare. We have discovered at IHS headquarters that it is often much better for us to bring the team together in a room, face to face to work on issues rather than fumbling through a long string of emails that often lead to misunderstandings and miscommunications.

Our ability to make progress on our agency priorities – strengthening our partnership with tribes; reforming the IHS; improving the quality and access to care – requires us all to work together and to give our best effort. Meeting our mission and making progress on our agency priorities is essential to improving the health of our communities, the healthcare services we provide, and the health of each person who walks in our doors to receive care.

The President also said:

*"Let us, each of us, now embrace with solemn duty and awesome joy what is our lasting birthright. With common effort and common purpose, with passion and dedication, let us answer the call of history and carry into an uncertain future that precious light of freedom."*

Our call of history is to meet the federal responsibility to provide health care services to the Tribal nations we serve and to respect the government to government relationship we have with Tribes. Our call of history is to address the complaints that we hear from our patients and to focus our efforts on their needs. Our call to history is to correct the problems of the past and create a better healthcare system for the future. Our patients depend on us to do our best each day.

I am so grateful for all the work you do to ensure our patients get the best health care possible. I encourage you to work with your teams to find ways to continue the progress we are making. We will make the most progress by working together.

Thank you for all that you are doing to change and improve the IHS.

Yvette Roubideaux, M.D., M.P.H.  
Director