



ᏊᏍᏉᏃ ᏃᏆᏆ
CHEROKEE NATION®

P.O. Box 948 • Tahlequah, OK 74465-0948
918-453-5000 • www.cherokee.org

For Immediate Release

Contact: 918.949.1357
deaconturner@mac.com
Deacon Turner
Chairperson
Cherokee Nation Citizen Committee on Compensation

**STATEMENT OF CHEROKEE NATION CITIZEN COMMITTEE ON COMPENSATION CHAIRPERSON DEACON
TURNER ON COMMITTEE'S FINAL REPORT ON ELECTED OFFICIAL COMPENSATION**

Tahlequah, Okla (Jan. 27, 2022)- Today the Citizen Committee on Compensation completed our duties under Cherokee Nation law to review and adjust the compensation of Cherokee Nation elected officials. Our actions result in an increase to elected officials' compensation and benefits, the first such action since 2015. Elected officials will have periodic equal percentage pay increases over the period of the next three years, extending beyond current terms of office. **The Committee, not elected officials, are putting these increases into effect.**

Our actions begin bringing compensation for our elected officials closer to their peers in other tribes and executives in institutions of comparable size. The Committee also found that the salaries of hundreds of leadership and professional positions at Cherokee Nation have higher pay levels than our Chief and Deputy Chief.

Additionally, our actions reflect the substantial growth experienced by Cherokee Nation in recent decades and anticipated growth in the decades to come. Cherokee Nation and its entities operate on budgets in the billions of dollars, invest billions of dollars into future growth on behalf of the Cherokee people and have billions of dollars of annual economic impact. This growth increases the demands on the time, energy, and acumen of those who serve in elected office and therefore provides an additional justification for adjusting elected officials' pay.

The Committee made note of recent executive actions by the Principal Chief to conduct a comprehensive market study to determine increases in all employee pay and to steadily increase the minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2024. This action was met with support by the Council of the Cherokee Nation. Although employee compensation is beyond the scope of the Committee's duties, the Committee finds the Principal Chief's actions encouraging and consistent with the Committee's own views on ensuring competitive compensation for the entire Cherokee workforce.ⁱ Competitive salaries at all levels, from front line employees to elected leadership, is the key for Cherokee Nation to attract and retain top talent to best serve the Cherokee people.

The Council of the Cherokee Nation, in its wisdom, delegated this process to the Committee and took politics out of determining elected official compensation. The Committee, comprised of a diverse group of Cherokee citizens, conducted its review without regard to politics. We put our sole focus on objective analysis and sound conclusions in the best interest of the Cherokee Nation. The Committee conducted its work in a transparent manner and provided detailed explanations for our unanimous conclusions in the report.

No Cherokee Nation elected officials voted to give themselves a pay raise. Any statement to the contrary is simply false. The executive and legislative branches, by law, made our appointed independent Committee solely responsible for reviewing elected official compensation and making any adjustments it deemed necessary.

Elected official compensation, even with the increases in our report, represents **less than 0.15%** of Cherokee Nation's budget. Based on the Committee's discussion with Cherokee Nation's Finance Department, existing and anticipated government revenue can cover the compensation increases.

By legislative act the Council empowered the Committee to enact the final report into effectⁱⁱ. Elected official base salaries will increase by an average of 26% per year over the next three years along with changes to post-service benefits. The final report, which details these increases and other adjustments, can be found on [Cherokee Nation's website](#), goes immediately into effect.ⁱⁱⁱ

Deacon Turner, Chairperson

Cherokee Nation Citizen Committee on Compensation

And on behalf of fellow Committee Members Suzanne Gilstrap, Lyndon Emberton, Curtis Bruehl, and Teresa Adair.

ⁱ See Chief Hoskin's "Executive Order on Raising Employee Compensation," (November 15, 2021) <https://www.cherokee.org/media/lzbes3zs/executive-order-on-raising-employee-compensation.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Legislative Act 50-21, <https://cherokee.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=10233747&GUID=B471C5E5-7D0F-4DB3-A42F-9F6ED3748F42>

ⁱⁱⁱ Cherokee Nation Citizen Committee on Compensation Final Report (January 27, 2022) <https://www.cherokee.org/our-government/office-of-financial-resources/financial-reports/reports-for-cherokee-citizens/>