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(Neb)-Smith, Fischer To "Monitor Transition" Of Pine Ridge Job Corps Center

By: John Axtell Posted at: 06/09/2019 12:36 PM

CHADRON - Supporters of the Pine Ridge Job Corps Center hoping to get the support of Nebraska's congressional delegation in opposing its transfer from the U-S Forest Service to a contractor through the federal Labor Dept are disappointed with the response from Congressman Adrian Smith of Gering and Senator Deb Fischer of Valentine.

Although the Pine Ridge Center would remain open under the proposal released just before the Memorial Day weekend, the jobs of the current staff would end Sept 30th, the end of the fiscal year for the Forest Service.

Congressman Smith issued a statement saying he is a "strong supporter of vocational and technical education and training," and that the Trump Administration has decided to phase out federal operation of Pine Ridge and the other Forest Service-run centers to improve efficiencies.

Smith says he will be "monitoring the situation" as the Pine Ridge center transitions to contract operations "to ensure meaningful training and job skills development for our young people continues."

Senator Fischer also released a statement saying that she understands the concerns of the Chadron Community over the planned changes and that her staff has been in contact with Center Director Tammy Calamari and "continues to be engage on this issue."

Fischer also says she understands the importance of the Pine Ridge Center and is "closely monitoring the impact this transition to new management will have in the area... and will continue to work at the federal level to spur economic development and support job training."

Supporters of the Forest Service managing the Pine Ridge Center say the track record of centers run by private contractors through the Labor Dept indicates the long history of community service projects done in the region by students and teams from the Pine Ridge Center will end.

STATEMENT FROM CONGRESSMAN ADRIAN SMITH

"I am a strong supporter of vocational and technical education and training. Employers need workers as much as these young people need economic opportunity. In an effort to improve efficiencies, the Administration has decided to phase out federal operation of certain Job Corps centers, including Pine Ridge in Chadron. As Pine Ridge transitions to contract operations, I will be monitoring the situation to ensure meaningful training and job-skills development for our young people continues."

STATEMENT FROM SENATOR DEB FISCHER

"My office has been in touch with the Director of Pine Ridge and I understand the concerns the Chadron community has in regards to the termination of the Jobs Corp program. My staff continues to be engaged on this issue and I am closely monitoring the impact this transition to new management will have in the area. I understand the importance of this center and I will continue to work at the federal level to spur economic development and support job training," said Senator Fischer