



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

July 27, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

I write to you today regarding the nearly five-decade incarceration of Leonard Peltier. As President of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the oldest, largest, and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization in the United States, I urge you to grant clemency to Mr. Peltier or support his petition for compassionate release at the Bureau of Prisons (BOP).

Mr. Peltier, 78, is an enrolled citizen of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians who is in his 48th year of imprisonment – making him the longest-serving political prisoner in the United States. His trial was plagued with several egregious and well-documented instances of due process violations. In a powerful letter to you in 2021, former U.S. Attorney James Reynolds, whose office handled the prosecution and appeal of Mr. Peltier’s case, wrote that the government’s case “likely would not be upheld by courts today,” and that “a grant of executive clemency would serve the best interest of justice and the best interests of our country”.

For Indian Country, Mr. Peltier’s incarceration remains a deeply painful symbol of the inequities of the U.S. justice system, particularly in its treatment of Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Americans have long been victims of systemic racism, particularly at the hands of law enforcement and the U.S. criminal justice system. His prolonged incarceration has inspired three generations of Native American activists and grassroots movements across the globe aiming to correct unfair and discriminatory policies towards Indigenous communities.

NCAI’s support for Mr. Peltier’s clemency has been long-standing and unwavering. I have included our most recent resolution on the matter, but NCAI also has standing resolutions on this matter from 1999 and 2011, and former NCAI President Brian Cladoosby wrote to President Obama in 2015 seeking clemency for Mr. Peltier.

President Biden, you have previously committed to strengthening the U.S. government’s relationship with Native communities. Now is the time to demonstrate to Indian Country that you recognize this injustice and violation of human rights and continue your efforts in support of the long needed reconciliation between the United States and Indigenous peoples that have been fraught with centuries of mistreatment and injustice.

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NCAI is, once again, joining the long list of Indigenous Peoples, humanitarian organizations, and respected leaders, nationally and internationally, who have raised their voices in a call for the release of Leonard Peltier.

Enough is enough, Mr. President—after nearly five decades of imprisonment, this is now a matter of not only justice but mercy as well. We urge you to immediately commute the sentence for Leonard Peltier or support his petition for compassionate release.

Sincerely,

Fawn Sharp
President, National Congress of American Indians

Enclosure: [NCAI Resolution ECWS-22-010](#)