Media Contact: Information Service
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Commissioner of Indian Affairs Glenn L. Emmons today wired his and the Bureau's congratulations to the Southern Ute Tribe of Colorado as they prepared to sign a contract with Blue Cross and Blue Shield to provide health protection for the Southern Ute Indians.

In his telegram to Tribal Council Chairman Sam Burch, Commissioner Emmons praised the Council for its far-sightedness and progressive attitude.

Although the care of Indian health has not been under the Bureau since it was transferred to the Public Health Service in July of this year, the Commissioner is vitally interested in any programs that tend to better the Indian state of wellbeing.

The Southern Ute Tribe will pay for the group health insurance from its own tribal funds. The Utes are one of the first tribes in the Nation to undertake such a self-sufficient health insurance program. Over 500 Southern Utes are covered by the contract.

Here is the text of the Commissioner’s congratulatory message:

"My Dear Mr. Burch:
"May I extend for myself and my colleagues in the Indian Bureau our warmest congratulations for your far-sightedness and progressiveness in the Tribal Council's approval of a contract with Blue Cross and Blue Shield?
"You and your tribe have taken a lead in this action which other tribes may do well to follow. And we are proud of your council’s thoughtfulness in providing the far-reaching advantages of this type of insurance for the people of your tribe.
"It is our hope that Southern Ute Resolution 808 will be a milestone along your road to better health and increased happiness.
Respectfully,
Glenn L. Emmons
Commissioner."

A similar telegram of congratulations was sent to the Southern Utes by the Public Health Service, the agency which was named the guardian of Indian health by Congress last July.