

**Congressman Jeff Fortenberry**  
First District of Nebraska

NEWS RELEASE

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March 14, 2008

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**Fortenberry Introduces Resolution Honoring Chief Standing Bear**

Washington , D.C. -- Congressman Jeff Fortenberry has introduced legislation honoring the legacy of Chief Standing Bear on the centennial of his death. House Resolution 1043 recognizes Chief Standing Bear's monumental achievements for the civil rights of Native Americans. It has 47 cosponsors.

"I am honored to celebrate the life and legacy of Chief Standing Bear. He became one of America 's first civil rights leaders because he sought human decency and justice. His court case culminated in recognition of Native Americans as persons under the law," said Fortenberry.

Fortenberry is also leading an initiative to put Chief Standing Bear on the newly authorized Sacagawea \$1 coin which will be issued next year.

Standing Bear was chief of the Nebraska-based Ponca Tribe. Due to an earlier treaty, in 1878 the government forced the Ponca Tribe to leave its home in Nebraska for Indian Territory in what is now Oklahoma . The hardship of travel, illness, and the inhospitable conditions of Indian Territory caused many members of the tribe to perish including Chief Standing Bear's son. Determined to bury his son in his homeland, Chief Standing Bear led thirty members of his tribe back to their home in Nebraska . Upon their return, they were arrested by the Department of the Interior.

Before they could be returned to Indian Territory , Chief Standing Bear enlisted the help of Thomas Tibbles of the predecessor to the Omaha World-Herald and two attorneys. Together, they petitioned the federal court to rule on the Ponca Tribe's treatment by the government. In 1879 the case came before Judge Elmer Dundy. Judge Dundy ultimately ruled that Native Americans were citizens with all of the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution. The Ponca won their freedom and eventually were able to return to their home in Nebraska . Chief Standing Bear would spend the next four years touring the Eastern United States promoting Native American rights. He died in September 1908.