

University of Oklahoma College of Law

## University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons

---

American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817-1899

---

1-11-1899

**Indebtedness of the Choctaw Nation. Letter from the Acting Secretary of the Interior, transmitting copies of a memorial and report in relation to an appropriation for discharging the indebtedness of the Choctaw Nation.**

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/indianserialset>



Part of the [Indigenous, Indian, and Aboriginal Law Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

H.R. Doc. No. 140, 55th Cong., 3rd Sess. (1899)

This House Document is brought to you for free and open access by University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817-1899 by an authorized administrator of University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [Law-LibraryDigitalCommons@ou.edu](mailto:Law-LibraryDigitalCommons@ou.edu).

INDEBTEDNESS OF THE CHOCTAW NATION.

---

LETTER

FROM

THE ACTING SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

TRANSMITTING

COPIES OF A MEMORIAL AND REPORT IN RELATION TO AN  
APPROPRIATION FOR DISCHARGING THE INDEBTEDNESS OF  
THE CHOCTAW NATION.

---

JANUARY 13, 1899.—Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be  
printed.

---

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
*Washington, January 11, 1899.*

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith copy of the memorial to  
the Congress of the United States by the general council of the Choctaw  
Nation, approved by its principal chief October 25, 1898, praying  
that Congress appropriate, out of the funds of said nation, the sum of  
\$75,000 to be used in discharging the outstanding indebtedness of said  
nation.

I also inclose herewith copy of a report upon said memorial by the  
United States Indian inspector for the Indian Territory recommend-  
ing the action prayed for, and also a copy of the report of the Com-  
missioner of Indian Affairs recommending that Congress grant the  
authority for the disbursement of said sum of \$75,000 of the invested  
funds of said nation for the purpose indicated in said memorial.

The Department concurs in said recommendations of the Indian  
inspector and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and submits said  
papers for such action as may be deemed best by Congress.

Respectfully,

THOS. RYAN, *Acting Secretary.*

The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

---

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, December 8, 1898.*

SIR: Inclosed herewith is a report dated November 23, 1898, from  
Inspector Wright, transmitting a memorial adopted by the Choctaw  
council praying that Congress appropriate, out of the funds of the  
Choctaw Nation, the sum of \$75,000, to be used in discharging the out-

standing indebtedness of said nation. This memorial is certified up by the principal chief of the Choctaw Nation for approval by the President. Inspector Wright recommends the favorable consideration of this memorial, with the proviso that the payment be made by an officer of the Government, and that all warrants be examined and indorsed by an official of the Choctaw Nation before payment.

If this memorial is deemed by the Department to be an act, resolution, or ordinance of the Choctaw council requiring the approval of the President before it becomes operative, then the President can not approve it, for the reason that it is not certified by the national secretary, as provided in the agreement set forth in the Curtis Act.

I think, however, that the memorial may be accepted by the Government as an expression of the desire of the representatives of the Choctaw people for the action asked to be taken, and acted upon as such.

The reasons given why the money should be appropriated, in my opinion, are very good ones; and if you think that the paper can be treated as merely the expression of the wish of the representatives of the Choctaw people, I would recommend that a copy of the same, together with a copy of this report, be transmitted to the Speaker of the House of Representatives to be laid before that body, and that a copy of the papers also be furnished the President of the Senate to be laid before that body, with a view to an authority from Congress for the disbursement of \$75,000 of the Choctaw invested funds for the purpose indicated.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. A. JONES, *Commissioner.*

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

MUSCOGEE, IND. T., *November 23, 1898.*

SIR: I have the honor to forward herewith a memorial passed by the recent council of the Choctaw Nation, addressed "To the Congress of the United States."

In this memorial it is represented that the Choctaw Nation is in debt to the extent of some \$75,000; that the present administration is not responsible for the existence of such debt, a large part of same having been incurred by reason of having to defend the nation against the gross and unjust claims of whites and negroes to citizenship in the Choctaw Nation, and that such persons acquired the right to sue under an act of Congress giving the Dawes Commission the right to hear and determine citizenship cases, with the right to appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States; that, while not impugning the act of Congress, this law is cited as one of the causes of indebtedness; that, owing to the recent agreement with the Dawes Commission, the Choctaw government has incurred heavy and unusual expense, and, as the royalty from coal and asphalt has been diverted from the general fund and set aside for school purposes under the control of the Secretary of the Interior, and desiring to start under the new system of government free from debt, it is therefore the desire of the general council of the Choctaw Nation that Congress appropriate \$75,000 out of the invested funds of that nation to be used in liquidating their outstanding indebtedness.

In submitting this for your consideration and appropriate indorsement I would respectfully state that this subject was discussed with me by several members of the council of the Choctaw Nation, as also by the governor, who desired in the same manner to liquidate this indebtedness.

It was first proposed to call in, consolidate, and reissue all outstanding warrants to bear interest at 8 per cent per annum. Such method has its objectionable features, in view of the fact that the Creek Nation, in a similar instance, in reissuing warrants, were in some manner burdened with a vast amount of fraudulent warrants. Furthermore, it was represented that their invested funds held by the United States Government are drawing 5 per cent, while these new warrants were to bear 8 per cent and might be floated for an indefinite period and not considered in negotiations at their par value.

Those warrants now being issued for the support of the schools in that nation are accepted by merchants and others at a discount of from 10 to 25 per cent, and it is unreasonable to require teachers and others drawing salaries to accept, in payment of their salaries, warrants subject to such discount.

I therefore recommend that this memorial receive favorable indorsement, with the provision that payment be made by an officer of the Government, and that all warrants be examined and indorsed by an official of the Choctaw Nation before being paid; also, that hereafter no more warrants be issued if possible to avoid it.

All schools are hereafter to be conducted by the government and the expenses of same paid from royalties on coal and asphalt, and such expenses can be paid by check.

As the Choctaw Nation receives about \$30,032 annually from the United States Government in addition to the revenues collected from various sources, it would appear that by proper management the issuing of these objectionable warrants could hereafter be dispensed with and all payments made by their officers in cash on presentation of properly authenticated vouchers.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. GEO. WRIGHT,

*United States Indian Inspector for Indian Territory*

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

(Through the Commissioner of Indian Affairs),

*Washington, D. C.*

[Bill No. 22.]

A MEMORIAL.

*To the Congress of the United States:*

Your memorialist, the general council of the Choctaw Nation in regular session assembled, would most respectfully represent unto your honorable body that the Choctaw Nation is in debt, amounting to some seventy-five thousand dollars (\$75,000); that the present administration is not responsible for the existence of said debt; that a large part of said debt was incurred by reason of having to defend the nation against the gross and unjust claims of whites and negroes, without a drop of Indian blood, to citizenship in the Choctaw Nation; that these persons acquired the right to sue under an act of Congress giving the Dawes Commission the right to hear and determine citizenship cases, with the right of appeal to United States court.

Your memorialist does not by these words impugn the motives of Congress, but recites this law as one of the causes of our indebtedness.

That owing to the agreement entered into at Atoka, I. T., on April 23rd, 1897, our government has incurred heavy and unusual expenses, and, moreover, since under that agreement our main source of revenue, to wit, royalty from coal and asphalt, has been diverted from the common treasury and set aside under the control of the Secretary of the Interior exclusively for school purposes, and having a new lease of life for eight years under the agreement, and recognizing the fact we are on trial, we feel that we can better demonstrate our ability for local self-government if we start out free from debt: Therefore,

*Be it resolved by the general council of the Choctaw Nation assembled,* We most respectfully ask your honorable body to appropriate seventy-five thousand dollars (\$75,000) out of invested funds to be used in liquidating our outstanding indebtedness.

Passed the house Oct. 24th, 1898.

J. A. DUKES, *Speaker.*

Passed the senate Oct. 24th, 1898.

H. P. WARD, *President.*

Approved Oct. 25th, 1898.

GREEN MCCURTAIN, *Principal Chief, C. N.*

EXECUTIVE OFFICE, CHOCTAW NATION,  
*Sans Bois, Ind. T., 1898.*

I, Green McCurtain, principal chief of the Choctaw Nation, do hereby certify that the foregoing is an act of the national council of said nation, passed at its regular session, 1898, and approved by me in my official character on October 25, 1898, and I do hereby submit the same for the approval of the President of the United States under the provisions of the act of Congress of June 28, 1897 (30 Stats.), entitled "An act for the protection of the people of the Indian Territory, and for other purposes."

In witness whereof I have hereunto signed my name as principal chief of the Choctaw Nation on this the 31st day of October, 1898, and caused the great seal of the nation to be affixed.

[SEAL.]

Attest:

GREEN MCCURTAIN,  
*Principal Chief Choctaw Nation.*

SOLOMON J. HOMER,  
*National Secretary Choctaw Nation.*