

Dear At Large Citizens and Voters

We're sure many of you were as dismayed as we were when the recent campaign for Principal Chief took on such a negative and malicious character. We were proud that Principal Chief Chad Smith maintained integrity in his statements, refusing to participate in the mud-slinging. We now realize that we underestimated the energy and impact that such negative tactics generate.

We are appalled at the idea that our next leader could be Bill John Baker, who fourteen years ago helped prop up the dysfunctional administration of Joe Byrd. At that time, as a council member, Baker aligned with Byrd and voted to fire the Cherokee Marshal Service and impeach the justices of the highest court, which led to a Constitutional crisis. In the 1999 election, Baker ran as Byrd's Deputy Chief. If the chaos and turmoil of the recent campaign and election seem familiar, there's a reason for it. Is this what the next four years will look like?

We are appalled that Bill John Baker has played fast and loose with the reputations and livelihoods of honest, hard-working employees and public servants. He has smeared the good names of renowned Cherokee doctors and administrators, accusing them of federal crimes, even after federal officials quickly clarified that no crimes had been committed. He has smeared the names of the Fortune 500-caliber executives of the Cherokee Nation Businesses Board by implying that they are engaged in unethical activity and need to be audited, even though CNB has won auditing awards for the past nine years. And when the final vote count did not go in his favor, Bill John Baker smeared Automated Election Services, even though there was *never* a shred of evidence to support the allegations of vote tampering, damaging the reputation of this independent business, which has conducted thousands of elections without incident.

We are appalled that Bill John Baker has dragged the good image of the Cherokee Nation through the mud, alleging falsely that the government is corrupt, that health care and services have been cut, that employees have been intimidated, that the Cherokee Nation owns and wastefully uses a private jet, and that vote tampering has taken place. These are only a few of the many lies that have been repeated over and over. As these allegations are printed in local media, they open the door for anti-Indian sentiment. The comment sections of the Tulsa World reveal that there are many who rejoice in seeing tribal turmoil, hoping it will lead to the destruction of tribal sovereignty. It is inexcusable for a man who wants to be the Principal Chief to publicly place the Nation in a bad light and make it vulnerable to attack in his quest for personal power.

We have heard some voters say that they have nothing against Chief Smith, but he has had three terms in office and it's time for change. But it is dangerous to vote for the "other guy" without knowing who he is. For the past twelve years, the Cherokee Nation has been prospering and growing. Tribal revenue has increased sixfold and there has been an almost 300% increase in jobs. Knowledge of history, language, and culture are