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Kiowa Housing Authority Staff Reinstated

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Carnegie, OK. Today, the Chairman of the Kiowa Tribe, Lawrence SpottedBird, announced the immediate reinstatement of the staff and the reopening of the Kiowa Housing Authority (“KHA”) offices after an unprecedented and controversial attempt by the Housing Commission (“Commission”) to terminate all employees and provide generous severance packages in defiance of a new Housing law. Chairman SpottedBird called the mass-termination of all employees and payments wholly inappropriate and a violation of law.

Rather than follow the Housing Law, in a surprise move by the KHA Commission, the Chairman of the Commission, Bruce Poolaw publicly announced the mass termination of all employees based on unfounded speculation of “certain termination” of KHA staff by the Kiowa Tribe and based on “comments made by the Kiowa Tribal Chairman”. Mr. Poolaw provided no further explanation.

After many years of operating as a “stand-alone” entity that received the Kiowa Tribe’s federal HUD funds, the Legislature recently enacted the Kiowa Housing Law to bring the Housing Authority within the operations of the Tribe’s government. In a unanimous decision, the Legislature enacted the Housing Law over the objections of the long-serving Director of the KHA, who wanted the KHA to remain semi-independent from the Tribe. The Legislature noted that it had received numerous, ongoing complaints that the KHA failed to build any new homes for decades, and that the KHA has only provided minimal housing renovation services to a limited number of homes. In addition, despite the lack of affordable housing for the Kiowa People, the Director of the KHA, however, had no hesitation in completing an expensive renovation to the Housing Authority offices. The Legislature’s enactment of the Housing Law is specifically designed to hold the KHA responsible for its actions and to bring the KHA into the Tribe’s governmental operations in order to provide better housing services to the People.

The Director’s actions, confirmed by the Commission, are without authority and blatantly violate the purpose of the Housing Authority and Housing Law. The KHA Commissioners and Director have an obligation to carry-out the Housing Law, and had no authority to abolish the Housing Authority.

Since his election to office in July 2022, Chairman SpottedBird has vowed to improve the delivery of housing services to the Kiowa People and to hold Directors of the Tribe accountable. In order to correct the Commission’s improper actions, Chairman SpottedBird has reinstated Housing Authority staff and has reopened the Housing Authority offices, effective immediately,