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February 22, 2008

Honorable Dirk Kempthorne
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240
FAX: 202-208-6956

RE: Tribal Gaming – California Consultation Hearing

Dear Secretary Kempthorne:

The League of California Cities (League) respectfully requests that the Department of the Interior adopt a process to conduct consultation meetings with local government representatives when considering land trust applications in California and the eligibility of Indian gaming. Local jurisdictions are significantly affected by the impacts of off-reservation casino developments, gaming related land acquisitions and tribal restorations. The Indian gaming industry in California has expanded at an unprecedented rate in recent years and the impacts on local communities have been just as pronounced.

The League understands that Carl Artman, Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, will be in California on March 7 to meet with local jurisdictions, and we hope that the League and our city officials can have a constructive role in this meeting.

Local government in California serves as the primary service provider to individual residents, businesses, and tribal governments alike. Cities and counties oversee and implement land-use policies affecting their communities and are responsible for providing such vital services as police, fire protection, water supplies, road maintenance and emergency care. As the geographical reach and number of tribal governments has grown in California, the interdependent nature between local government's need to protect and be responsive to a wide range of constituencies and tribal governments' responsibility to its members has grown as well.

Given the direct role and responsibility of local government in addressing and mitigating the impacts (whether they be environmental, social, economic, etc.) of new development projects, it is essential for local jurisdictions be included in the consultation process to review the regulations that govern the processes of restored tribes and fee-into-trust applications (25 CFR Part 151), particularly when the issue of potential gaming activity is involved. Indeed, it is essential if mutually beneficial solutions to long standing public concerns are to be resolved.

We look forward to a positive response from your office.

Sincerely,

Chris McKenzie
Executive Director

cc: David Bernhardt, Solicitor of the Interior
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