

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0519

February 17, 2011

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20241

Dear Secretary Salazar:

As the newly-elected Congressman from the 19th district of California, I want to express my opposition to proposals for off-reservation gaming by Indian Tribes. I believe that sovereignty of Indian Tribes is the highest priority when government is addressing gaming issues.

I have always been a strong opponent of off-reservation gaming and any allowance of it will lead to a very slippery slope. California has a very important role in the realm of Indian Compacts, as it is one of the states with the most diverse population of Indian Tribes. In fact, I understand that the U.S. Department of Interior currently has over twenty gaming trust applications pending from California Tribes alone. While California permits gaming, it only permits gaming on federally approved reservation lands and in accordance with the Indian Gaming Regulations Act (IGRA).

I believe the purpose of IGRA was to confirm the right of Indian Tribes to conduct gaming on their aboriginal lands. Moreover, in 2000, the California voters approved Proposition 1A. This measure was to authorize Class III gaming on tribal lands in order to promote tribal self-reliance. I am concerned that any acquiescence of off-reservation gaming will lead to detrimental impacts and legal fights in California. Not only does off-reservation gaming violate the intent of the California voters, but it sets a dangerous precedent that may lead to the practice of "reservation shopping".

As a member of the House Subcommittee on Indians and Alaska Native Affairs, I will be involved in issues such as off-reservation gaming. I hope that the Administration will recognize the harmful impacts that can arise from permitting off-reservation gaming.

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I would appreciate hearing your thoughts on off-reservation gaming.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JEFF DENHAM', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

JEFF DENHAM
United States Representative

CC:

Larry Echo Hawk, Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs
Michael S. Black, Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs