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“Keeping the Wheels Rolling in Washington State”

April 27, 2011

Via Fax: (1) page total

Senator Dianne Feinstein
Attn: Devin Rhinerson
Senate Hart Building 331
Washington, D.C. 20510
FAX: (202) 228-3841

RE: Support For S.771 “Tribal Gaming Eligibility Act”

Dear Senator Feinstein,

The Automotive United Trades Organization (AUTO) is a nonprofit trade association in Washington State that represents operators and suppliers of motor fuel outlets in our state. These small businesses provide the public with motor fuels at over 500 convenience stores, truck stops, service stations, car washes in our state.

Unfortunately, our members face extreme financial pressures from the business activities of certain treaty tribes that do not play by the same rules. Often exempt from local and state regulations and taxes, these tribal business identities are bankrolled by casinos and other business activities that our members are legally denied. The advantages granted the tribes are nearly impossible for a non-tribal business to overcome.

Making matters worse, many tribes seek to establish additional business centers off the reservation by acquiring new properties. Commonly called “reservation shopping”, this problem needs to be addressed and quickly.

One can understand why in the past certain rights or privileges were extended to tribes who were suffering from chronic unemployment and other problems. However, when a tribe shopping for new reservation today has 4-10 times as many employees as it does total membership, its no longer about jobs for Native Americans. Its about expanding wealthy business empires.

Thank you for introducing S. 771 to curb reservation shopping.

Respectfully,

Tim Hamilton
Executive Director