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

February 1, 1996

Dear Mr. and Mrs.:

Thank you for contacting me regarding the dispute between the Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) and the West Bank Homeowners Association.

As you may know, the CRIT reservation was created by Act of Congress in 1865. In the decades since its creation, the boundaries of the reservation were defined by several executive orders. The so-called "West Bank" of the reservation, in which the Homeowners Association is located, was added to the reservation in January, 1969 by an order of the Secretary of the Interior. However, the authority of the Secretary to issue this order has been questioned, and the Tribes and the Association have contested jurisdiction over the land ever since.

The Supreme Court appointed Special Master Frank McGarr to resolve a dispute between the states of Arizona and California over water rights around the Colorado River. The ruling of the Special Master in this matter would address the 1969 order of the Secretary. On January 18, McGarr ruled that the Secretary exceeded his congressionally-granted authority, and struck down the order of January, 1969. While ruling out jurisdiction of the CRIT, this decision leaves in some question whether the land is now under the direction of the Federal government or the State of California.

I have contacted Congressman Sonny Bono, who represents the West Bank in Congress. I will continue to work with him to ensure that the interests of West Bank residents are properly represented.

Please let me know if I may be of future assistance.

Sincerely,


David Dreier

DD:bmf