

# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240

MAY 26 2010

Reverend Chip Worthington  
Pastor, Rohnert Park Assembly of God Church  
Stop the Casino 101 Coalition

[REDACTED]

Dear Reverend Worthington:

Thank you for your letter addressed to President Barack Obama regarding the Supreme Court decision in Carcieri v. Salazar and the authority of the Secretary of the Interior to acquire land in trust for American Indian tribes. The White House has asked that I respond to your letter.

When the United States Supreme Court issued its February 2009 decision in Carcieri v. Salazar, the result created uncertainty about the Secretary's authority to acquire land in trust for all federally recognized Indian tribes under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (IRA). In response to the Court's decision, Senator Byron Dorgan and Representative Dale Kildee acted swiftly to propose legislation that would resolve this uncertainty. The Secretary issued letters of support to Senator Dorgan and Representative Kildee for legislation to amend the IRA. The Secretary supports this legislation because he believes that it is appropriate for the Congress to reaffirm the intent of the IRA and the Secretary's authority to take land into trust for all federally recognized tribes.

The Secretary has made it a priority for the Bureau of Indian Affairs to promptly process and make a determination on the land into trust applications that are now pending. Across Indian Country, a reconstituted tribal land base improves the tribal infrastructure necessary for good tribal governance. It allows the opportunity for a tribal government to better serve its people and to be a better neighbor to state and local governments. While the legislation is pending, we are exploring appropriate administrative action in an effort to be responsive to the tribes who have submitted land into trust applications. In making its decision on these pending lands into trust applications, the Department will not exceed its authorities under the IRA.

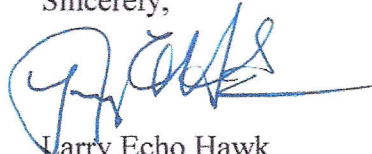
The Department is committed to Indian tribes and the land into trust process. The Secretary and I remain in full support of the pending legislation. We hope Congress acts quickly to pass this legislation to reaffirm the Secretary's authority to take land into trust for tribes.

In my capacity as Assistant Secretary, I have met with state government officials and citizens in order to help ensure my understanding of how Federal law reconciles obligations to tribal and state governments. These discussions explore the costs and benefits from a tribal gaming

operation as well as the impact on local communities. These considerations are not points that any decision maker in this Administration takes lightly.

Thank you for your interest in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Larry Echo Hawk", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Larry Echo Hawk  
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs