

DIANNE FEINSTEIN
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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0504

<http://feinstein.senate.gov>

November 10, 2011

Secretary Ken Salazar
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Secretary Salazar:

I am writing to express my opposition to the development of a casino by the Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians near the Joshua Tree National Park or in the City of Joshua Tree, California.

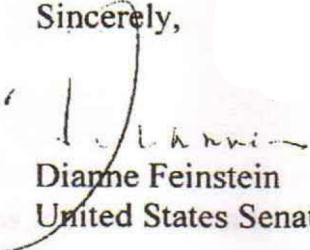
As you may know, the Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians have expressed an interest in developing a casino in the Morongo Valley. The first potential site is on the tribe's existing 160 acre reservation in the City of Twenty-Nine Palms, less than one mile from the main entrance and visitor center of Joshua Tree National Park. Placing a casino less than a mile from the park's visitor center and park wilderness will forever change the nature of the desert treasure. Joshua Tree National Park Supervisor Mark Butler shares my opposition to the proposed casino and has expressed concern that it would jeopardize the park's long standing legacy as a crown jewel of the national park system. Further he has informed my staff that such a proposal would impair the Park Service's ability to preserve natural resources, cause significant noise and light pollution, obstruct scenic viewsheds and adversely impact the desert tortoise population within the park.

Out of respect for the Park, I understand that the tribe has proposed developing alternative sites including 90 acres of off-reservation property owned by the tribe in the unincorporated town of Joshua Tree. While I appreciate the tribe's willingness to consider alternative proposals, I also have to express my opposition to the development of a casino at this site. Hundreds of Joshua Tree community members have contacted me and my staff to express a wide array of concerns about the impacts on regional tourism, crime, poverty, alcoholism and gambling addiction. They have also made me aware of a petition that is currently

being circulated which 1,277 of the town's 7,414 residents have signed. This is not the appropriate place to develop a casino and I ask that you reject any forthcoming two-part determination for this site.

Despite my opposition to these two proposals, I remain open to considering alternative proposals which would better protect the desert and its residents. Thank you for your attention to this important issue. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the matter, please contact me.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

DF: cc/dr