

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

September 5, 2006

Honorable Alphonso Jackson, Secretary
United States Department of
Housing and Urban Development
451 Seventh Street, SW, Room 10148
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Jackson:

We are writing to express our concern with the disbursement of United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding to the Enterprise Rancheria (Rancheria) located in Butte County, California (County). Several of our constituents and local elected officials have stated their concern with the Rancheria's plans for the funds as well as the lack of local public comment on the issue. We would appreciate your assistance in ensuring that proper procedures are followed in this circumstance and that an open, public process can be commenced regarding the proposed use of these funds.

It is our understanding that the Rancheria has received a HUD grant and expressed an interest in purchasing 63.33 acres in an unincorporated area of the County. Preliminary plans call for the construction of a gymnasium, cultural center, and 15 homes for elderly tribal members. Of special concern is that the purchase of this property using HUD funds may be a covert way for the tribe to enter these lands into a trust status and then begin gaming operations. It is critical to note that this area of the County is a residential neighborhood near to schools, and that two other tribes already operate casinos in this area. While we support the tribe's desire to provide adequate housing and economic opportunities for its members, these efforts should be in concert with the efforts of local officials and citizens. In this instance, anything less than a legally binding agreement signed by the tribe that expressly forbids gaming will not satisfy our concerns or those raised by our constituents and local area elected officials.

With the rapid spread of tribal gaming and especially in light of the Rancheria's previous attempt to purchase this parcel, local officials and residents are right in wanting to ensure that public process such as National Environmental Policy Act and California Environmental Quality Act are carefully followed. We are aware that the Rancheria commenced an environmental review process in November 2005. This process was completed by the tribe in 12 days and did not include substantial public notice or comments from local residents or governments. In fact, the County was not aware of this plan until nearly one month ago. This lack of notice and public participation is unacceptable.

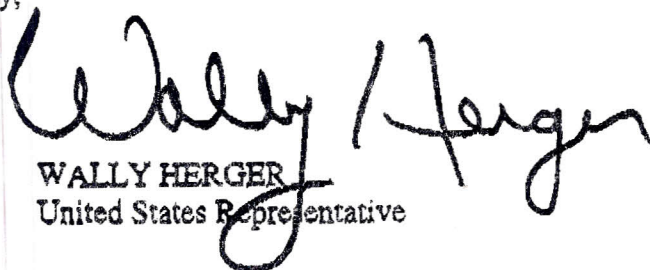
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As you know, the use of HUD funds for tribal land purchases has received increased public and judicial scrutiny due to shortcomings in the program's administration and oversight. Of further concern is that the County is home to an operating casino that was opened under irregular circumstances and in circumvention of normal process. For these reasons, and because the Rancheria has significant tribal infighting, including membership enrollment appeals pending before the Bureau of Indian Affairs, we do not believe HUD should proceed without substantial public input and administrative oversight.

We would appreciate your immediate attention to this matter and look forward to your response regarding what can be done to resolve this issue to the benefit of all parties. Please do not hesitate to contact us or Chris Parilo at (916) 786-5560 at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,


JOHN T. DOOLITTLE
United States Representative


WALLY HERGER
United States Representative

