



United States Senate
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April 29, 2008

The Honorable Dean Florez
Chair
Committee on Governmental Organization
California State Senate
1020 N Street, Room 584
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Senator Florez,

I write to express my support for SB 1695, your legislation to prevent the development of state-tribal compacts with tribes for the development of casinos prior to gaining federal recognition status and gaming eligible land in trust.

As you may know, I have opposed efforts to develop off-reservation casinos in California for many years. My opposition stems from my belief that many voters supported Proposition 1A in 2000 because it was proposed as measure to allow limited gambling on existing tribal lands. However, since then there have been multiple efforts to develop casinos well beyond reservation boundaries. Your legislation will serve as an important tool to combat this problem by respecting the Department of Interior's primacy in determining the suitability of land for gaming purposes and its joint responsibility with Congress to grant federal recognition status to tribes.

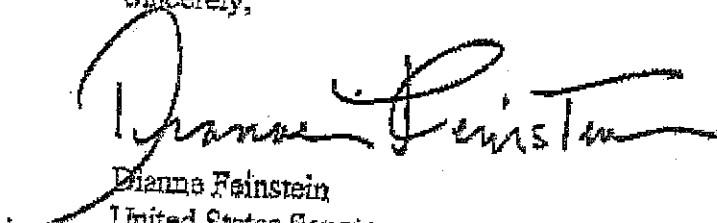
Your legislation has become all the more important in the wake of the newly announced compacts for the North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians and the Wiyot Tribe. I have written to both Governor Schwarzenegger and Secretary Kempthorne to convey my opposition to these new compacts, which, if approved by the legislature and the Department of the Interior, would permit the first off-reservation casino in California.

I believe efforts to develop compacts with tribes in advance of federal recognition status or trust land approval manipulates the process. While the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act provides governors with an opportunity to express support for a tribe's application to place land in trust for gaming, in California state support for a compact requires the approval of both the governor and legislature. It is my understanding that in the case of the North Fork and Wiyot compacts, Governor Schwarzenegger does not intend to seek approval from the legislature or the Interior Department at this time and potentially not until next year. Therefore, it seems to me that development of this compact now can serve no purpose other than to provide added pressure on the Department of the Interior to approve the pending land trust applications.

I reject this heavy handed approach and hope that the current and future governors refrain from attempting to unduly sway federal land trust decisions by prematurely approving tribal compacts. I believe the best way to ensure this is the case is by adopting your bill.

Thank you for offering this thoughtful legislation. I hope that your colleagues in the State Senate and the Assembly act quickly to approve this bill.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

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