



CITY OF COMMERCE

Tina Baca Del Rio
Mayor

Joe Aguilar
Mayor Pro Tem

Hugo A. Argumedo
Councilmember

Robert C. Fierro
Councilmember

Rosalina G. Lopez
Councilmember

November 6, 2008

Dale Morris
Regional Director
Pacific Regional Office
Bureau of Indian Affairs
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, CA 95825

RE: North Fork Rancheria's Casino Project; Application to move to Highway 99

Dear Mr. Morris,

I write on behalf of the City of Commerce City Council to formally oppose the proposed North Fork Rancheria Casino application which would authorize a casino on land 40 miles from the tribe's existing reservation.

Even though we are not from the Central Valley, there's a lot at stake for our community if this application receives federal approval. It will set a strong precedent for off-reservation tribal gambling throughout California. Right now there are 21 pending applications for other tribes to acquire new land for gaming and another 85 applications by tribes to acquire more than 8,000 acres of land adjacent or contiguous to existing reservations for expansion that might be used for gaming in the future.

If the Department of Interior approves the North Fork application to annex a 305-acre site just off one of the Central California's busiest highways, Highway 99, it will open the flood gates for other tribes to begin reservation shopping everywhere in California. This was not what voters intended when they authorized tribal gaming.

In 2000, California voters approved Proposition 1A to promote tribal self-reliance. Proposition 1A legalized tribal gaming on historical tribal lands that were situated away from urban areas. Since then, some tribes have been approached by professional casino operators who want to change the rules to build casinos in urban areas and along highway corridors to get the greatest financial return possible. Furthermore, taking outside land purchased by these casino operators into trust for purposes of gaming appears to violate the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) which mandates that prior to engaging in tribal gaming, the tribe must have governmental jurisdiction over the land.

Approving a move by the North Fork Rancheria to Highway 99, 40 miles away from their historic lands will have lasting consequences for all of our communities. I do not want a

rush by gaming interests to relocate in my community. I urge you to reject this application and work with the tribe to find a more suitable location on their existing land.

To provide you with a brief background on the City of Commerce, the city is located in the southeast region of Los Angeles County. We proudly provide community service programs such as after-school homework help, public safety services, various senior citizen activities, numerous social service and parks and recreation programs to a community of 13,500 residents. These programs and services are made possible by the revenues generated by our local card club. Without these revenues, our community would have to consider cutting many of the services and programs that aid the elderly, divert our youth from criminal activity and provide for the general welfare and safety of our visitors and residents.

In addition, Commerce is a member of the California Cities for Self Reliance Joint Powers Authority (JPA) that represents the interests of approximately 160,000 residents of Commerce and five other cities in Los Angeles County that regulate non-tribal casinos.

Thank you in advance for your review and consideration of our request to reject the North Fork Rancheria's Casino Project application. I would greatly appreciate a written response to this correspondence, as well as any future notification on all development aspects pertaining to this application. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at (323) 722-4805, at extension 2257.

Sincerely,



Tina Baca Del Rio
Mayor
City of Commerce

cc: Honorable Dirk Kempthorne, US Department of Interior
Honorable Barbara Boxer, US Senate
Honorable Diane Feinstein, US Senate
Honorable George Radanovich, US House of Representatives