

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

**SUPPORT A COMMON SENSE APPROACH
ON
OFF-RESERVATION GAMING**

October 6, 2009

Dear Colleague:

The U.S. Department of Interior is currently preparing a new policy for the federal acquisition of lands for gaming purposes under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act.

In recent years, there has been a significant rise in the number of Indian tribes who are seeking to acquire lands off their reservations and outside their ancestral and historic territories in order to open casinos. This trend has caused a tremendous amount of controversy among Indian tribes and state and local communities.

Simply put, we believe that tribes who acquire lands for gaming purposes should have an ancestral or historic tie to the land. This is a position that is widely supported by Indian tribes across the country. In fact, just recently a number of tribes and tribal organizations have written the Secretary of Interior requesting that the Department of Interior adopt a new policy that would require tribes to have an ancestral or historic tie to the land in which they desire to operate a casino.


We believe that this is a common sense approach to Indian gaming and is consistent with the intent and purpose of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act.

We would urge you to join us in signing the enclosed letter to Secretary of Interior Salazar requesting that the Department of Interior adopt a new policy that would require tribes to have an ancestral or historic connection on lands which they intend to conduct gaming.

If you would like to sign this letter, please contact Mr. James M. Williams, Jr. in Congresswoman Kilpatrick's office at JamesM.Williams@mail.house.gov or x52261 or Mr. Kyle Lombardi at Kyle.Lombardi@mail.house.gov or X52915

Sincerely,


Carolyn C. Kilpatrick (D-MI)
Member of Congress


Kevin McCarthy (R-CA)
Member of Congress

Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20241

Dear Secretary Salazar:

It has come to our attention that the Department of Interior is currently reviewing its administrative policies relating to federal acquisition of lands taken into trust for Indian gaming purposes. We are writing to express our concerns with existing Department policies that allows Tribes to acquire lands for gaming purposes outside their ancestral territory.

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of Tribes seeking to acquire lands to build off-reservation casinos. Many of these applications are from Tribes seeking lands that are far from their existing reservations and outside their ancestral and historical territory. We believe this is contrary to an underlying purpose of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA), which was designed to encourage reservation-based economic development and the creation of local jobs for tribal communities. We understand that a large number of Indian Tribes from across the country share this view and have written you expressing their concern on this issue.

The Department's current interpretation of IGRA seems to allow this type of activity to occur. Thus, we strongly encourage you to review these policies and regulations in order to bring a more reasonable approach to federal land acquisition for Indian gaming purposes.

We thank you for your consideration of these requests and look forward to working with you on this important issue.