

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 29, 2016

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary of the Interior
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Secretary Jewell:

We write you today with concerns regarding a matter pending before the Department of the Interior (DOI). We have learned that the Office of Indian Gaming is working with the Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians to issue an Indian Lands Determination that could allow for a casino in the city of Vallejo, California.

The property for which the Scotts Valley Tribe has requested an Indian Lands Determination is more than 70 miles from the Tribe's headquarters in Lake County, California. It is our understanding that the Scotts Valley Tribe does not provide any significant services in Vallejo. For example, the Tribe's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program does not have offices in Vallejo or elsewhere in Solano County.

It is particularly concerning that the Scotts Valley Tribe's request for an Indian Lands Determination is not following the common procedure that many of our constituents have come to expect. In nearly all cases, a request for an Indian Lands Determination and a fee-to-trust application are filed concurrently, which as you are aware, triggers a number of notification requirements. Such was the case with the Scotts Valley Tribe's previous effort to establish a casino in Richmond, California, which was firmly rejected by DOI in 2012.

Additionally, concurrent consideration of the Indian Lands Determination and fee-to-trust application provides the public and local, state, and tribal governments the opportunity to offer input and comments early in the process. Not only is it essential that stakeholders and interested parties have an opportunity to express their views from the outset, but concurrent consideration can provide DOI with vital information that may not otherwise enter the record.

As representatives of the citizens and governments most affected by this decision, we would like to know why this process was bifurcated in this particular case as well as the steps DOI has taken to fully examine the Tribe's current and historical connection to the land in question. We also request that the Office of Indian Gaming not issue a decision until a response to our inquiry is provided.

Sincerely,



MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress



JARED HUFFMAN
Member of Congress



JOHN GARAMENDI
Member of Congress

cc: Larry Roberts, Acting Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs