UNITED STATES
EPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR RECOMMENDS LEGISLATION AUTHORIZING LONG-TERM LEASES FOR TWO ARIZONA INDIAN RESERVATIONS

The Department of the Interior has recommended enactment of Federal legislation authorizing long-term leasing of lands on the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Reservation and the Papago Reservation, both in Arizona.

Two bills now before Congress would permit land leases not to exceed 99 years for public, religious, educational, recreational, residential or business purposes. They would provide for a maximum term of 40 years for farming leases when substantial investment is necessary for land improvement to grow specialized crops, and would continue the present maximum of 10 years for grazing leases and farming leases where substantial investment is not required for development. They would not apply to mineral development leases.

An Act of August 9, 1955 authorized leases for periods of 25 years, with an option for one additional term of 25 years. The Department said this limitation has hampered the Indians of both reservations in negotiating leases for reservation development and has prevented them from gaining maximum return from their lands. Potential leases have been unable to obtain necessary financing to develop property under leases with only 50-year terms, the Department added.

Under the proposed measures, the State of Arizona would be authorized to amend its State laws or Constitution to assume civil and criminal jurisdiction over all or any part of the reservations, permanently or for an authorized period. Such action would be subject to the consent of the Tribal Council and the approval of the Secretary of the Interior.

The Department recommended retention of a provision in each of the bills that would allow municipalities with boundaries adjacent to the reservations to annex all or part of them, with consent and approval of the Tribal Council and the Secretary of the Interior. The Department recommended against a provision in the bills that would permit annexation of reservation lands as much as 10 miles from city boundaries.

Other significant provisions would allow Indian owners to dedicate land for streets, alleys, and other public purposes, with the approval of the Secretary of the Interior; permit the Indians to provide for extension of State and county zoning ordinances, housing codes, and health and sanitation laws to leased areas; and affirm the power of the Tribal Council to enact zoning, building and sanitary regulations for reservation lands not under State jurisdiction.

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