Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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The Department of the Interior has recommended enactment of Federal legislation to provide for disposition of a $29.1 million award to the Mission Indians, the Pitt River Indians, and certain other eligible Indians of California to be identified later should a bill be passed by Congress.

The judgment was made by the Indian Claims Commission and represents additional compensation for lands in California to which the Indians involved held aboriginal title and which were taken by the United States March 3, 1853.

Funds to cover the award were appropriated by Congress in 1964 and are on deposit in the United States Treasury, drawing four percent interest.

As proposed, the bill would also authorize the Secretary of the Interior to prepare a roll and make a per capita distribution to those Indians concerned in this judgment. A roll of Indians of California listing 36,094 names of persons living on May 24, 1950 may be used in preparing the new judgment rolls.

Under the bill, as recommended by Interior, those who apply for enrollment must be living on the date it becomes law; and must present proof that their name or that of an ancestor appeared on anyone of the previous California Indian rolls prepared pursuant to the Act of May 18, 1928; or must establish descent from an Indian ancestor residing in California on July 1, 1852, prior to taking of the land by the United States.

Ineligible to share under the terms of the award are those whose Indian ancestry is derived solely from the Northern Paiute, Southern Paiute, Mohave, Quechan (Yuma'), Chemehuevi, Shoshone, Washoe, Klamath, Modoc, and Yahooskin Band of Snakes, groups sometimes considered in the past to be Indians of California.

Those whose Indian ancestry is derived partly from one of the groups listed and partly from other Indians of California may elect to share in judgment awards to one or the other, but not both.

The Department said the $29.1 million award should not be confused with a $5 million award made in 1944 by the Court of Claims in favor of the Indians of California. The proposed legislation also provides for distribution of more than $1 million remaining from the 1944 award after a $150 per capita distribution was completed June 30, 1955.