Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON – Acting Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs Donald "Del" Laverdure today welcomed hundreds of tribal leaders and representatives attending the 2012 Tribal Self-Governance Annual Conference taking place this week in New Orleans, La. The conference, which started May 6 and runs through May 10, is being held at the Sheraton New Orleans Hotel.

The Acting Assistant Secretary opened the portion of the conference devoted to Department of the Interior bureaus and agencies who fund self-governance tribes. Laverdure assured the conference attendees that proposed changes within the Indian Affairs organization do not specifically target the Indian Affairs Office of Self-Governance and would not affect self-governance tribes separately from other tribes. "No decisions have been made and tribal feedback will be incorporated into any final decisions," Laverdure said. "Furthermore, no matter what changes, if any, are made, we will work closely with the tribes and Office of Self-Governance to ensure that services are not disrupted."

Proposed administrative changes include proposed streamlining plans for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). The proposals are the subject of tribal consultation meetings taking place across Indian Country in seven states. The sessions, which began in April and will continue into summer, have already been held in Florida, Arizona, Washington, and South Dakota. The remaining sessions will be held in Oklahoma, California and Alaska. For more information on these and consultation meetings on other topics, visit the Indian Affairs web site at http://www.indianaffairs.gov/WhoWeAre/ASIA/Consultation/index.htm.

He reiterated his office's strong support for a legislative Carcieri "fix," and commitment to supporting amendments to Title IV of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 that seek to resolve the problem of tribes having to follow the BIA's and the Indian Health Service's differing sets of self-governance program administration requirements.

Laverdure reviewed Administration accomplishments that the Interior Department and Indian Affairs have achieved since 2009:

- Tribal consultations are at historic levels across the federal government, and President Obama has held three White House Tribal Nations Conferences where leaders from the federally recognized tribes meet with Cabinet and senior Administration officials.
- Over 157,000 acres of land have been taken into federal trust status for federally recognized tribes. These lands are used for housing, economic development, tribal government services, cultural and natural resource protection, and other purposes deemed necessary by tribes.
- Strengthened the Department's government-to-government relationship with federally recognized tribes through the development of a formal DOI-wide tribal consultation policy. The Department also is in the process of formalizing its consultation policy for Alaska Native Corporations as called for by congressional appropriations acts of 2004 and 2005.
- The provision of over $3.0 billion to tribal communities under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and since its inception, the guaranteed lending of over $1.0 billion to qualified tribes and individual Indian entrepreneurs by Indian Affairs through its business loan

guaranty program.

- Indian Affairs' continuing efforts to promote tribal economic development which include coordinating its loan programs with the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Commerce to improve their effectiveness in Indian Country.
- The Interior Department's finalizing of new leasing regulations that include the creation of residential and commercial leasing subparts and provisions that allow the development of wind and solar renewable energy projects on federal Indian lands.
- The continuing implementation by the Department, Indian Affairs and the BIA Office of Justice Services of the Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010, which gives tribes greater sentencing authority, strengthens services to victims, helps combat alcohol and drug abuse, and improves coordination between tribal and federal law enforcement. This is being accomplished through training for tribal court personnel and practitioners and law enforcement officers, as well as through the Secretary's Safe Indian Communities High Priority Performance Goal (HPPG) Initiative to reduce violent crime in tribal communities.
- The Interior Department reached a settlement agreement in the Cobell class action lawsuit and the Agriculture Department reached a settlement in the Keepseagle case. Forty-one tribal trust cases have been settled that include over $1.0 billion to tribes. Several water settlements have been finalized ending costly, decades-old litigation.

The Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs has responsibility for assisting the Secretary of the Interior in the fulfillment of his trust responsibilities to tribal and individual Indian trust beneficiaries, and in promoting self-determination and self-governance for the nation's 566 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes. The Assistant Secretary oversees several programs including the Indian Affairs Office of Self-Governance, as well as the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), which administers one of two federal school systems.