Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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(WASHINGTON) - Secretary Norton today praised the Senate's confirmation of David Anderson, a nationally recognized entrepreneur and American Indian leader, as Interior's Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs.

"Dave Anderson's inspiring vision, proven management expertise and compassion for Indian issues will help us improve our ability to support tribal governments," Secretary Norton said in commending the Senate's action. "Dave's innovative leadership and dedication to constant improvement will serve him well as assistant secretary for Indian Affairs."

The Senate confirmed Anderson on December 9. President Bush had nominated Anderson in September.

"I am deeply honored and humbled to accept the position as Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs. There are many opportunities and challenges ahead, and my first order of business is to continue to immerse myself in the issues at hand and to work hand-in-hand with the American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments, as well as the Bureau of Indian Affairs to determine the immediate goals and priorities of these organizations," said David Anderson. "Next, I look forward to setting the stage for a new positive direction in Indian Country for our youth, one that is full of achievement and accomplishment. Our youth need to know that there isn't anything that we can't accomplish as Indian people if we start believing in ourselves and start taking full responsibility for own destinies."

The Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs is responsible for fulfilling Interior's trust responsibilities and promoting self-determination on behalf of the 562 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments. The Assistant Secretary also oversees the Bureau of Indian Affairs, an agency with 10,500 employees nationwide, which is responsible for providing services to about 1.4 million individual American Indians and Alaska Natives from the federally recognized tribes. Anderson, a member of the Chippewa and Choctaw tribes and an enrolled member of the Lac Courte Oreilles Lake Superior Band of Ojibwa, is a successful entrepreneur, expert in revitalizing failing companies, and founder and chairman of Famous Dave's of America, Inc. - one of the nation's fastest growing chains of family restaurants. With his confirmation,

Anderson steps down as chairman of the Board of Directors and his other capacities with Famous Dave's. Well-known for his dedication to the American Indian community, Anderson has donated more than $6 million to Indian advancement projects.

To help disadvantaged American Indian children, the Anderson Family established the Youth Skills Foundation in 1999 with a $1.4 million gift. Proceeds from Anderson's award winning BBQ cookbook are donated to the foundation.

In 2001, Anderson also founded the Life Skills Center for Leadership, offering life-changing programs for at-risk Indian youth and young adults. Television personality Oprah Winfrey was so impressed that her Angel Network awarded a $25,000 grant to the Life Skills Center in 2002.

During his business career, Anderson founded three publicly traded companies on Wall Street, created more than 18,000 new jobs, and reorganized a number of failing businesses in Indian Country, enabling them to become financially successful operations.

In 1982, Anderson, as chief executive officer for the Lac Courte Oreilles Chippewa tribal enterprises, built a team that successfully turned reservation businesses into profitable and stable operations. Under his leadership, gross revenues increased from $3.9 million to $8 million. This achievement was recognized by President Reagan's Commission on Indian Reservation Economics. Anderson has served on numerous national and state commissions, including the American Indian Education Foundation (2003); Presidential Advisory Council for Tribal Colleges and Universities (2001); National Task Force on Reservation Gambling (1983); Council on Minority Business Development for the State of Wisconsin (1983); Wisconsin Council on Tourism (1983) and Harvard University's Native American Program.

Having weathered the changing fortunes of an entrepreneurial career, Anderson also has used his life experiences to help others. As a public speaker he shares his optimism and inspiration with youth groups and community organizations. "No matter how tough things may seem today, if you hold fast to your dreams and work hard, tomorrow's rewards will always come," Anderson has said. His numerous honors include being named a Bush Leadership Fellow (1985); recognized as Minnesota and Dakota's Emerging Entrepreneur of the Year by Ernst and Young, NASDAQ, and USA Today; Restaurateur of the Year by Minneapolis-St. Paul Magazine (1998); and chosen an Olympic Torch Carrier of the 2002 Winter Olympics by his community.

Anderson received a master's degree in Public Administration from Harvard University at the John F. Kennedy School of Government in 1986. He lives in Edina, Minnesota, with his wife.

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