Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON – Interior Secretary Gale Norton today lauded the U.S. Senate's action late Friday confirming Neal A. McCaleb as Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs. "I want to thank the Senate for expeditiously approving Neal McCaleb's confirmation, " she said, "As an important member of my team, Neal's solid leadership, management skills and experience will serve well the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Indian Country and our Nation."

McCaleb will replace James H. McDivitt, who has served as the acting Assistant Secretary since January. "With his steady hand on the tiller, Jim McDivitt has done a great job of guiding the Bureau during this transition," said Secretary Norton, "His dedication and professionalism ensured the agency continued to operate smoothly, for which I am grateful."

Following McCaleb's swearing-in, McDivitt will resume his former position as Deputy Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs for Management. "I want to thank Secretary Norton for her support during the past few months," said McDivitt, "I'm also looking forward to working with Assistant Secretary McCaleb on his goals for improving the BIA's education, economic development, and public safety programs, as well as continuing to move forward on trust reform."

McCaleb, a member of the Chickasaw Nation, served as Oklahoma's first Secretary of Transportation in Governor Bellmon's Administration from 1987 to 1991, and recently in Governor Keating's Administration from 1995 to 2001, where he was responsible for overseeing the construction and maintenance of the state's transportation systems, and the state-assisted general airports program. In 1999, then-Secretary McCaleb negotiated the reinstatement of passenger rail service to Oklahoma with Amtrak after a 20-year absence.

McCaleb was the first in the history of the state government to serve concurrently as Director of both the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (1987 to 1995) and the Oklahoma Transportation Authority in addition to serving as Cabinet Secretary. He also served eight years in the Oklahoma House of Representatives and was elected Minority Floor Leader in 1978. McCaleb has been a practicing engineer with more than 40 years experience in designing and supervising the construction of roads, bridges, public facilities and architectural structures in Oklahoma and throughout the Southwest. He is a native of Oklahoma City, OK. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering from Oklahoma State University. He and his wife Georgann have four grown children. The Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs has responsibility for fulfilling the Department's trust responsibilities and promoting self-determination on behalf of Tribal governments, American Indians and Alaska Natives. The Assistant Secretary is also responsible for providing services to approximately 1.4 million American Indians and Alaska Natives who are members of the 558 federally recognized tribes.

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