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Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton today praised President Bush’s intention to nominate Neal A. McCaleb to serve as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. The announcement is subject to confirmation by the U.S. Senate, once the official nomination is made by the President.

“Neal McCaleb will bring a unique blend of skills, experience and background that will serve him well as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs,” said Secretary Norton. “His compassion for Indian issues, decisive management skills and ability to facilitate dialogue will help to improve this program and the relationship of the Department with Indian tribes around the country.”

Mr. 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 1995-2001, where he is responsible for overseeing the construction and maintenance of the state’s transportation systems, and the state assisted general airports program. He is the first in the history of the state government to serve concurrently as Director of both the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (1987-95) and the Oklahoma Transportation Authority in addition to serving as Cabinet Secretary.

In 1999, then Secretary McCaleb negotiated the reinstatement of passenger rail service to Oklahoma with Amtrak after a 20-year absence. Prior to that he was 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.

Mr. McCaleb also served eight years in the Oklahoma House of Representatives and was elected Minority Floor Leader in 1978. 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 for 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 561 federally recognized tribes.

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