Media Contact: Thomas W.Sweeney (202) 219-4150
For Immediate Release: March 23, 1998
Print PDF

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Kevin Gover today thanked Oklahoma Indian organizations and tribal leaders for their receptivity and attention to the message he delivered on Indian youth issues during his visit to the state last week. "I an exceedingly grateful that my message on attacking the causes of alcohol and drug abuse among Indian youth was warmly received everywhere I traveled in Oklahoma," Gover said.

During his March 21 University of Oklahoma Indian Law and Policy Symposium speech, Gover stressed to tribal leaders and others that combating the devastating youth problems of alcohol and drug abuse and teen suicide must come first and foremost in Indian Country. "Nothing else matters until we can find tribal solutions to end these terrible problems. We must provide the leadership and vision to guide Indian youth back to constructive and fulfilling lives." Gover thanked the University of Oklahoma School of Law and the American Indian Law Review for the opportunity to deliver this message.

Indian youth and education was the theme of Gover's March 20 visit to the Bureau of Indian Affairs Riverside Indian School in Anadarko. Gover met with students, aged eight to 17, and toured the Riverside campus with them. "It's obvious they are fond of their school and its administration," he said. "It speaks volumes for the work that is being done there." Gover also attended a March 20 Oklahomans for Indian Opportunity (OIO) reception in Norman. His parents, Maggie and Bill Gover, were active members of OIO. Thirty-one tribes were represented at the event. "I was especially impressed with the emphasis OIO placed on our youth themes," said Gover. "We particularly enjoyed the performances given by Indian youth groups that use traditional tribal practices and values in carrying out their pledge to lead drug- and alcohol-free lifestyles." Indian dances and songs were performed by the Comanche Youth Dance Group, the Comanche Nation Pre-School Language Program, and the United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNITY).

Gover also thanked the Pawnee Nation for hosting a March 22 event that brought together the region's tribal leadership.