Media Contact: Ralph E. Gonzales (202) 219-4150
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Secretary Bruce Babbitt announced today that the final rule to implement amendments to the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act will be effective on August 23. "This rule, developed with tribal governments, will promote Indian self-sufficiency by allowing tribes and tribal organizations to more easily contract from the federal government for services provided to their members," Secretary Babbitt said. President Clinton signed the Self-Determination Contract Reform Act in 1994 which authorized the e Departments of Interior and Health and Human Services to convene a rulemaking committee to negotiate implementing regulations with representatives of American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and tribal organizations. The committee included 48 tribal members, 9 Interior representatives and 6 Health and Human Services representatives, the largest rulemaking committee ever convened. The Committee completed its work in June, 1996, and achieved in just over one year consensus on virtually every rule to implement over two billion dollars in self-determination contracts funded by the Departments.

The final rule was published in the Federal Register on June 24, 1996. It standardizes requirements Indian tribes and the Departments must follow in applying for and operating Indian Self-Determination contracts and grants from the Departments of Interior and Health and Human Services.

The tribal co-chairs report on the process noted: "As a result of the rulemaking process, substantial trust and mutual understanding have developed between federal agency representatives and tribal representatives. This is because federal and tribal representatives on the committee have met as equals, reflecting a true government-to-government relationship between separate sovereigns."