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Interior Assistant Secretary Eddie F. Brown today said the recently established Indian Gaming Management Office has developed an action plan and oversight process to provide assistance to Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) field staff and Indian tribes on gaming management issues and problems. "We believe the staffing of this important office will help to curtail some of the serious problems we have encountered in management contracts between tribes and gaming management firms, lease agreements, tribal-state compacts, per capita payments from gaming revenues, and Class III gaming operations without approved compacts with the states," Brown said. "Gaming has been one of the fastest growing forms of economic development in Indian Country. Upon passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) in 1988, there was no lead time to establish a regulatory authority before tribes begin gaming activities. No one foresaw the implications and rapid expansion of high stakes gaming and consequently never considered the need for a moratorium to allow time for the logistical planning and establishment of a regulatory process," the assistant secretary added.

As of Dec. 3, Interior has approved tribal-state compacts (required by the IGRA for casino-type games) for 53 Indian tribes in sixteen states, 30 of which have been approved during 1992. "And we know that some Class III gaming is being conducted without compacts because of lawsuits challenging the classification of certain types of gaming," Brown said. "Likewise, there are Indian tribes that do not have approved management contracts for varying reasons, but our gaming management team is in the process of bringing all of those into line," he added. Brown said that most Indian gaming operations are a boon to the economies on reservations and to the surrounding non-Indian communities in the way of job creation, development and spending of tourist dollars. "Tribes have enhanced their governmental systems, increased and enhanced reservation infrastructures, built day care centers, fire departments, water and sewage treatment facilities, provided educational and other training opportunities for members, and provided for investments in other economic development ventures," Brown said. BIA has assisted 28 gaming operations in providing $61.1 million in direct loans (5, $5.1 million), loan guarantees (18, $55 million), and Indian business development grants (5, $1 million) for construction of facilities and operating capital. Almost $14 million has been repaid and all guaranteed loans are current. One direct loan is delinquent and is in the process of being modified because of construction delays.

Professionals, the current staff is working closely with the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC), a three-member commission created under the 1988 law. "We will continue to have many responsibilities in Indian gaming, even when the NIGC is fully staffed and operational," Brown said. "Our close working relationship will allow us to have an easy transition of duties to the NIGC as they assume many of these duties." The Indian Affairs assistant secretary also pointed out that his office has worked closely with Interior's Inspector General (IG) to share information regarding Indian gaming operations. "This business has grown at such a rapid pace that it has almost been impossible for one federal entity to maintain oversight over all establishments and by working together we will hopefully correct the problems that have surfaced," Brown said. He added that the new gaming office will maintain liaison with the National Indian Gaming Association, the North American Gaming Regulators Association, the National Attorneys General Association and other gaming industry-related

organizations to improve tribal-state relations pertaining to Indian gaming.