Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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The Department of the Interior has announced its support of proposed Federal legislation providing for distribution of a judgment fund of over $6 million recovered by the Pawnee Indian Tribe of Oklahoma.

The amount actually awarded the Tribe by the Indian Claims Commission and appropriated by Congress in May 1963, was $7,316,096.55. However, payment of attorneys' fees and expenses and other costs of litigation reduced the sum available for distribution to $6,439,088,88, including accrued interest.

Judgment was based on a claim by the Pawnee’s that they were inadequately compensated for lands in Kansas and Nebraska which they ceded to the United States from 1833 to 1893. The Pawnee Tribe in Oklahoma is the same tribe that ceded the lands to the Government during that period.

Proposed legislation submitted by the Department would permit the Pawnees, subject to the approval of the Secretary of the Interior, to make their own determination of how they want their judgment fund programmed. The Pawnee Business Council, governing body of the Tribe, is considering an approach that would distribute part of the money through a family plan program and deposit the remainder in the United States Treasury to draw interest. The interest would be used to finance tribal self-help measures, such as scholarship grants, industrial development, housing, employment assistance, and a loan program