Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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For Immediate Release: July 7, 2010
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WASHINGTON – Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Larry Echo Hawk on June 24, 2010, issued a final approval to the May 11, 2010, proposed Class III Gaming Compact (Compact) between the Seminole Tribe of Florida (Tribe) and the State of Florida (State). The signing of the approval letter was conducted on his behalf by Deputy Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Del Laverdure.

“I am very pleased that the Tribe and the State were successful in reaching an agreement on the terms of a gaming compact. I want to wish the Tribe continued success in its economic endeavor,” Echo Hawk said.

“The signing of this gaming compact approval letter demonstrates Indian Affairs’ commitment to support tribal efforts to foster economic development and tribal self-sufficiency,” Laverdure said.

Seminole Tribal Chairman Mitchell Cypress executed the Compact on April 7, 2010, as directed by Tribal Council Resolution No. C-194-10, which also ratified the Compact. Florida Governor Charlie Crist executed the Compact on the same day. The Compact was then submitted to the Florida legislature, where it was approved as part of Senate Bill 622 and signed into law by Governor Crist on April 28, 2010.

Under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA), 25 U.S.C. § 2710(d)(8)(C), the Secretary may approve or disapprove a Compact within 45 days of its submission. If the Secretary does not approve or disapprove the Compact within 45 days, IGRA states that the Compact is considered to have been approved by the Secretary, "but only to the extent the Compact is consistent with the provisions of [IGRA]." 25 U.S.C. § 2710(d)(8)(C)(emphasis added). Under IGRA the Department must determine whether the Compact violates IGRA, any other provision of Federal law that does not relate to jurisdiction over gaming on Indian lands, or the trust obligations of the United States to Indians.

The Interior Department reviewed the Compact, along with additional documentation submitted by the parties, and determined that the Compact satisfies the requirements of IGRA. Therefore, the Department approved the Compact pursuant to IGRA.

The Interior Department, through the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs, has the authority and responsibility to review and approve tribal-state gaming compacts. Congress enacted IGRA to provide a basis for gaming by federally recognized tribes “as a means of promoting tribal economic development, self-sufficiency, and strong tribal governments.”

Revenues from tribal gaming are used for specific purposes, including funding tribal government operations and programs, and providing for the general welfare of the tribe and its members. Proceeds from gaming can allow a tribe to provide greatly needed services such as health care, education and housing, thereby increasing the tribe’s self-reliance, one of IGRA’s goals.

The Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs has responsibility for fulfilling the Interior Department’s trust responsibilities and promoting self-determination on behalf of the 564 federally recognized American

Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments. The Assistant Secretary also oversees the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which is responsible for providing services to approximately 1.8 million individual American Indians and Alaska Natives from the federally recognized tribes.