Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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For Immediate Release: February 4, 2010
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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs Larry Echo Hawk today announced that he has named Paula L. Hart as Director of the IA Office of Indian Gaming. Hart, an enrolled member of the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe in New York, had been serving as the office's acting director since May 2008. The appointment became effective on February 1, 2010.

"I am pleased that Ms. Hart has accepted this opportunity to continue leading the Office of Indian Gaming," Echo Hawk said. "Her knowledge and experience in the field of tribal gaming make her a strong member of my team."

"I am grateful to have been provided this leadership opportunity," Hart said. "I am looking forward to working with Assistant Secretary Echo Hawk to meet the goal of empowering tribal nations."

Hart's federal career began in March 1993 when she joined the Bureau of Indian Affairs' ranks as a Rights Protection Specialist in its Eastern Area Office (now Eastern Regional Office), then located in Fairfax, Va., where she assisted federally recognized tribes with boundary disputes, treaty issues and tax rights.

In June 1994, she joined the Interior Department's newly established office on tribal gaming as a Management Analyst, where she was tasked with developing the initial national guidance for Indian Country on gaming matters – some of which is still being used today.

From July 1997 to May 2005, Hart served as a Paralegal Specialist under the Director of the Office of Indian Gaming Management (now the Office of Indian Gaming). As such, she assisted the Director and senior operating staff on all legal matters concerning tribal government operations and authorities relating to Indian gaming operations.

In May 2005, Hart was promoted to Deputy Director of the Office of Indian Gaming Management. In that post she held supervisory responsibilities and served in an advisory capacity to the Director, the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs and senior IA officials on the formulation and development of the BIA's national gaming programs to ensure compliance with the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988 (IGRA) and DOI policies, regulations and guidelines.

In May 2008, Hart was named the Acting Director of the Office of Indian Gaming, where her responsibilities have included, in addition to budget, personnel and administrative matters, overseeing the development of policies and procedures used to implement the Secretary's responsibilities under IGRA relating to land acquisition requests from federally recognized tribes for gaming purposes, tribal-state gaming compacts, tribal gaming per capita distribution plans, secretarial approvals of trust assets and gaming-related contracts and secretarial procedures for Class III casino-type gaming.

She also served from May 2008 to May 2009 as the acting Chief of Staff to the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs where she advised on matters relating to human resources, budget and administrative functions of IA offices and programs, and worked on special projects concerning a variety of issues

including federal acknowledgment, economic development, finance and tribal governance.

Hart holds a Bachelor’s degree in Political Science from St. Lawrence University in Canton, N.Y. (1984) and a Juris Doctorate from the University of Maryland’s School of Law in Baltimore (1990). She has been a member of the State Bar of Maryland since 1992.