Native Americans who want to know their rights should call or go online

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WASHINGTON, DC -- Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today announced that the Court-ordered process of notifying individuals of their right to participate in the $3.4 billion Cobell settlement is underway.

This formal notice process is a key step that precedes the court's formal review and, we hope, approval of the settlement. Congress approved the settlement on November 30, 2010 and the President signed the Claims Resolution Act of 2010 on December 8, 2010. The settlement will resolve the long-running and highly contentious class action lawsuit regarding the U.S. government's trust management and accounting of individual American Indian trust accounts.

"The Obama administration is continuing to move forward on its agenda to honorably and responsibly address long-standing injustices in Indian Country," said Secretary Salazar. "The court-ordered process is now spreading the word so individual Indian trust account holders can understand what their rights are and how they can participate in the settlement. Now is the time for those who want to know their rights under the Cobell Settlement to call the 1-800 number or go to the Indiantrust.com website."

Class Members all over the country are receiving detailed information about their legal rights and options via U.S. Mail. Information will also be provided through an extensive media campaign, which includes Native America print media, television and radio ads, and online advertising.

Background

On December 21, 2010, U.S. Senior District Judge Thomas F. Hogan granted preliminary approval of the Settlement, setting in motion a process through which hundreds of thousands of individual Indians who have or had government-managed IIM accounts or trust lands may receive some of the $3.4 billion Settlement Fund.

The judge's approval came after Congress passed and the President signed legislation approving the Settlement.

Information about the Settlement and legal rights is available to all American Indians and Alaska Natives.

The website www.IndianTrust.com and toll-free number 1-800-961-6109 are available to provide more information about the Settlement and the legal rights of Class Members. Individuals who are unsure whether they are included in the Settlement should visit the website or call the toll-free number for more information.

Class Members who receive a formal notice in the mail about the Settlement and who are currently receiving IIM account statements do not have to do anything to receive payment. Individuals who believe they should be part of the Settlement but do not receive a notice in the mail or are not receiving IIM account statements need to fill out a Claim Form as soon as possible, available at the Indian Trust website or by calling the toll-free number.

Individuals wishing to keep their right to sue the federal government over mismanagement claims covered by the Settlement must exclude themselves from the Settlement by April 20, 2011. Class Members can also submit written comments or objections about any Settlement terms that concern them by April 20, 2011.
