



Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Decision ends long-standing dispute, preserves government-to-government relationship

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WASHINGTON – Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Aurene M. Martin today announced that she has affirmed the results of the October 21, 2003 recall election and November 5, 2003 special election held by the Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa, a federally recognized tribe. The action ended a long-standing internal dispute over the tribe's leadership, which led to the closing of the tribe's casino and brought economic and political uncertainty to tribal members.

"Further delay in this already long-standing dispute can not be justified," Martin said in her decision. "I believe that the recall and special elections were fair and open and the results sufficiently reflect the will of the people.

"The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Midwest Regional Office had spent several months attempting to end a dispute among Sac and Fox tribal members about who represented their tribal government. On August 4, 2003, the Midwest Regional Director wrote to the tribal chairman and other interested parties stating the BIA's position on the dispute and cautioning them about the impact that would result from the tribal council's "failure to deal with the efforts of the tribal membership to express their will." A solution was offered whereby the Interior Department would recognize the results of a "fair and openly conducted" special election "initiated by a representative group of tribal members" as the representatives of the tribe "for the purposes of the government-to-government relationship between the United States and the Tribe."

On October 21 the tribe held a recall election and on November 5 a special election was held to fill four vacancies that had been created by the recall election. The results of the special election were verified by a six-member tribal election committee comprised of a representative group of tribal members and by two independent judges. After the Midwest Regional Director accepted the verified results of the special election, he issued a letter on November 7 identifying the seven members of the tribal council which the Bureau would recognize based on the recall and special elections: Wayne Pushetonequa, Harvey Davenport, Jr., Homer Bear, Jr., Keith Davenport, Deron Ward, Frank Black Cloud and Ray Young Bear. The three candidates who received the most votes in the special election each received overwhelming pluralities representing the votes of more than 30 percent of all eligible tribal voters.

The Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary's decision affirmed the Midwest Regional Director's recognition of the members of the tribal council for the Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa as stated in his November 7, 2003 letter, and her decision is final for the Department and effective immediately.

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