Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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For Immediate Release: July 29, 2004
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WASHINGTON – Secretary Gale Norton today announced that the foundation established by Congress to support Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) education programs has been renamed the National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education (NFEAIE) in a bill signed by President Bush on July 2, 2004. The foundation, designated the American Indian Education Foundation in its original legislation, felt the change was needed in order to avoid confusion with organizations having similar names.

"We are pleased that Congress acted in a timely manner to rename the foundation as the National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education," Norton said. "With this action, the NFEAIE board of directors can move forward in their mission to put private contributions to work on behalf of BIA students."

Congress established the foundation in December 2000 as a federally-chartered charitable nonprofit corporation under Title XIII of the Omnibus Indian Advancement Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-568) to accept and administer donations for the benefit of the BIA's Office of Indian Education Programs (OIEP) and "other activities" to further educational opportunities for American Indian students attending BIA-funded schools. Federal agencies are prohibited from accepting private donations unless authorized to do so by Congress.

NFEAIE board members include David Beaulieu, Ph.D. (Minnesota Chippewa Tribe - White Earth), director, Arizona State University-Tempe Center for Indian Education; Sharon K. Darling, founder and president, National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), Louisville, Ky.; John Guevremont, director, Mashantucket Pequot Tribe National Government Affairs Office, Washington, D.C.; Daniel Lewis (Navajo), senior vice-president and director, Office of Native American Financial Services, Bank of America, Phoenix, Ariz.; Nick Lowery, president, Nick Lowery Foundation and co-founder, "Nation Building for Native Youth," Tempe, Ariz.; JoAnne Stately (Minnesota Chippewa Tribe), senior program officer, The Saint Paul Foundation, St. Paul, Minn.; Linda Sue Warner, Ph.D. (Comanche), research associate professor, University of Missouri-Columbia Truman Center for Public Policy; and Della Warrior (Otoe-Missouria), president, Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA), Santa Fe, N.M. Secretary Norton and Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs David W. Anderson are ex-officio members of the board.

NFEAIE founding director Lorraine Edmo (Shoshone-Bannock) has over 20 years' experience in Indian education from her work with federal Indian education programs and having served as executive director of two non-profit Indian education organizations: the American Indian Graduate Center (AIGC) in Albuquerque, N.M., and the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) in Alexandria, Va.

NFEAIE will be organized as a 501(c)(3) corporation in the District of Columbia. Under the terms of the statute, the Secretary is authorized to provide support for NFEAIE for a period of at least five years until it becomes an independent entity. The board meets annually and operates independently from the Interior Department. NFEAIE is currently preparing to file articles of incorporation and by-laws with the District as well as applications for tax-exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and trademark protection for its name with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (PTO).