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I was briefed this morning for the first time by Special Trustee Paul Homan on his final Strategic Plan to reform trust fund management for Tribal and individual trust funds and resources.

The plan represents his views, independent from the Department of the Interior or the Office of Management and Budget. Before I make final recommendations, I intend to give the Strategic Plan close and thorough study.

However, based on a brief review and today's briefing, I have significant concerns. First, it adds another new layer of bureaucracy by creating a quasi-private, quasi-government agency to manage and administer trust funds. Creating new bureaucracies does not necessarily serve the goal of solving problems. Second, it requires large, new budget outlays, and we will need to evaluate each aspect of the proposal. Third, and most important, it seems to lack a fundamental understanding of the relationship of sovereign tribal governments and federal trust responsibilities. Indian Tribes are sovereign nations, not business enterprises to be run for profit.

I cannot support, and I believe that most tribes will not support, the separation and dissipation of the government-to-government trust relationship that extends well beyond funding to upholding the social, economic and cultural best interests of tribes and individual tribal members.