STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS UNITED STATES SENATE
ON
S. 2599, THE LEECH LAKE BAND OF OJIBWE RESERVATION RESTORATION ACT

JULY 11, 2018

Chairman Hoeven, Vice Chairman Udall, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's (Department) views on S. 2599, the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Reservation Restoration Act, which directs the Secretary of Agriculture to transfer certain lands in the Chippewa National Forest to the Secretary of the Interior to be held in trust for the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe in Minnesota.

Administering trust lands is an important responsibility that the United States undertakes on behalf of Indian tribes. The Congress, through its plenary authority over Indian Affairs, can direct the Department to accept and administer lands to be held in trust as it does in S. 2599. The Department thus does not take issue with Congress's decision to pursue legislative proposals, such as S. 2599, for this purpose.

S. 2599 directs the Secretary of Agriculture to transfer administrative jurisdiction to the Secretary of the Interior of approximately 11,760 acres of federal land to be placed in trust for the benefit of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. Under S. 2599, the Secretary of the Interior's land into trust action shall be in accordance with the regulations of the Department applicable to trust land acquisitions for Indian tribes that are mandated by federal legislation.

S. 2599 also includes several prohibitions, including that any federal law relating to the export of unprocessed logs harvested from federal lands shall apply to any such logs harvested from the lands defined in S. 2599; that the federal land defined in S. 2599 shall not be eligible or used for any gaming activity carried out under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act; and that any commercial forestry activity carried out on the lands shall be managed in accordance with applicable federal law.

This concludes my statement and I would be happy to answer questions.