

TESTIMONY
OF
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BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INDIAN, INSULAR AND ALASKA NATIVE AFFAIRS
ON H.R. 1880

July 22, 2015

Good afternoon Chairman Young and Ranking Member Ruiz, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Department on H.R. 1880, a bill to require the Secretary of the Interior to take into trust four (4) parcels of Federal land for the benefit of certain Indian Pueblos in the State of New Mexico.

H.R. 1880 deals with the status of certain lands as they directly relate to the Secretary's authority to receive through a transfer of federal lands and take such lands into trust for the benefit of federally-recognized Indian tribes. President Obama is committed to working with federally-recognized Indian tribes on a government-to-government basis on matters that affect such tribes. It is in the spirit of this commitment that the Department supports H.R. 1880.

H.R. 1880 directs the Secretary to transfer 4 parcels of land into trust for the benefit of the nineteen (19) Pueblos in New Mexico, as defined in the bill, comprising approximately 11.11 acres of Federal land located in Albuquerque, New Mexico. H.R. 1880 also provides that these lands, once transferred into trust, shall be used by the 19 Pueblos for the educational, health, cultural, business, and economic development of the Pueblos, and any private or municipal encumbrance, right-of-way, restriction, easement of record, or utility service agreement in effect on the date of enactment of H.R. 1880, shall remain.

The language in the bill allows the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to continue to utilize these parcels for current BIA purposes. The BIA currently utilizes one parcel to house the fire program for the Southern Pueblos Agency and the other parcel has a warehouse and an equipment storage yard, again for the Southern Pueblos Agency. The warehouse and yard store construction and transportation equipment for the BIA Roads Program and Natural Resources Program in the BIA Southwest Regional Office. The bill would also prohibits Class I gaming, Class II gaming, or Class III gaming. The Department supports H.R. 1880, and appreciates the improvements over previous versions of this proposed legislation.

The Secretary previously took approximately 8.4 acres into trust for the benefit of the 19 Pueblos in 2008, pursuant to Public Law 110-453. The Department appreciates the opportunity, provided in the bill, to conduct a survey satisfactory to the Secretary to determine the exact acreage and legal description of the land. We also recommend that the Pueblos work together to determine the appropriate exercise of their jurisdiction over the land addressed in this legislation.

This concludes my prepared statement. I will be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.