

**TESTIMONY OF
MIKE BLACK,
DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE AFFAIRS
ON H.R. 487,
A BILL TO ALLOW THE MIAMI TRIBE OF OKLAHOMA TO LEASE
OR TRANSFER CERTAIN LANDS**

JUNE 10, 2015

Good morning Chairwoman Young, Ranking Member Ruiz, and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide a statement on behalf of the Department of the Interior (Department) on H.R. 487, a bill to allow the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma to lease and transfer certain lands. The Department supports H.R. 487.

The Department is aware that the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma (Tribe) wishes to lease, sell, convey, warrant, or otherwise transfer all or any part of its interests in any real property that is not held in trust by the United States for the benefit of the Tribe without further approval, ratification, or authorization by the United States. As the language in the bill indicates, such lands do not include any lands held in trust by the United States for the benefit of the Tribe.

The Tribe is of the opinion that it cannot lease, sell, convey, warrant, or otherwise transfer all or any part of its interests in any real property not held in trust by the United States unless authorized by Congress. The Tribe cites federal law, 25 U.S.C. §177, which prohibits any "purchase, grant, lease, or other conveyance of lands, or of any title or claim thereto, from any Indian nation or tribe of Indians."

H.R. 487 would expressly allow the Tribe to lease, sell, convey, warrant, or transfer all or any portion of the interest in any real property not held in trust status by the United States for the benefit of the Tribe. The legislation also clearly states that H.R. 487 does not authorize the Tribe to lease, sell, convey, warrant, or otherwise transfer all or any portion of any interest in any real property that is held in trust by the United States for the benefit of the Tribe. Given these clear lines, the Department supports H.R. 487.

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.