

TESTIMONY
OF
WOODROW HOPPER
ACTING DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR MANAGEMENT
FOR INDIAN AFFAIRS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE
HEARING ON
S. 1601, THE “REAUTHORIZATION OF THE INDIAN CHILD PROTECTION AND FAMILY
VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACT”

September 24, 2003

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice Chairman and Members of the Committee, my name is Woodrow Hopper and I am the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Management for Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior. I am pleased to be here today to provide the Department’s testimony supporting S. 1601, a bill to amend the Indian Child Protection and Family Violence Prevention Act to provide for the reporting and reduction of child abuse and family violence incidences on Indian reservations.

The Department supports expansion of the number and breadth of employment positions that will be subject to the minimum standards of character under the Act. The Department recommends a review not only of applicable State criminal history repositories but also applicable tribal criminal history repositories. We also support the inclusion of the certification requirements for education employees who are responsible for child protection at residential and day schools. Certification is critical as almost all Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)-funded schools contract to provide important services, including mental health and other social services, to their students.

The Department supports conducting a study to help identify and reduce the barriers to implementation of the Act, with a particular emphasis on Tribal, Federal and State investigation and prosecution of Indian and non-Indian abusers. The study will allow the Office of Law Enforcement Services to identify efforts that better serve Indian communities and improve the implementation of

the President's citizen-centered government initiative. However, we respectfully request additional time in which to complete the more comprehensive report to better identify incidences of child abuse and family violence, and steps to improve intergovernmental and interagency cooperation.

The BIA, in cooperation with Indian tribes, must continue to develop more awareness at the local level to prevent child abuse. We must work together to insure that abusers do not have access to children, and that any incidences of abuse are prosecuted.

This concludes my statement. I want to thank you for introducing this legislation and for your support for the protection of our future generations. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.