

California Tribal Business Alliance Slams Federal Action on Off-Reservation Gaming

TAGS: California Indian Gaming Off-Reservation Casinos Government & Politics

The California Tribal Business Alliance (CTBA) today expressed serious concern over actions by the Federal Government to approve two off-reservation casinos in California earlier this month. Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs Larry Echo Hawk made the determination on September 2, 2011 to approve proposed off-reservation gaming facilities by the Enterprise Rancheria of Maidu Indians in Yuba County and the North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians in Madera County, both more than three dozen miles away from their respective reservations.

"The California Tribal Business Alliance is opposed to the erosion of tribal governmental jurisdiction by off-reservation casino deals pushed by non-Indian developers who encourage California tribes to claim territorial rights away from their current reservation in more marketable locations outside their traditional homelands," said Chairman Robert Smith of the CTBA.

"These tribes already have land eligible for gaming. To take distant land into trust just because it's more commercially viable runs contrary to longstanding federal Indian policies and establishes a defacto policy for tribes and their financiers to establish reservations near population centers strictly for gaming."

Chairman Smith added, "Frankly, we are outraged that Assistant Secretary Echo Hawk would disregard the historical, cultural and jurisdictional foundation of sovereignty - recognized territoriality - by approving off-reservation gaming."

The casinos still need approval from Gov. Jerry Brown, who promised during his 2010 campaign to push back against off-reservation gaming "away from historical tribal land," saying through his campaign, "tribal compact should involve historical tribal land only." (Sacramento Bee, 8/8/10)"The Governor's words during his campaign reflect the view of the vast majority of gaming and non-gaming tribes, as well as that of most Californians," Smith added. "We hope he remembers that approving casinos away from tribal lands sets a dangerous precedent and would threaten the public's long-term goodwill towards tribal gaming. If investors start luring Tribes to make off-reservation claims in urban areas like Sacramento, San Francisco, Los Angeles, then support from the public would erode and put all tribal gaming at risk.