



Rebuilding
Communities
Through Indian
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Media Release

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NATIONAL INDIAN GAMING ASSOCIATION ISSUES STATEMENT ON H.R. BILL 4893

Washington, D.C., July 26, 2006—The National Indian Gaming Association and a clear majority of Indian tribes nationwide are strongly opposed to H.R. 4893, as marked up by the House Resources Committee.

First, the bill is wrong because the Secretary of the Interior is right now preparing to issue a regulation under Section 20 to clarify the rules for off-reservation gaming.

Second, the bill is wrong because it violates Indian sovereignty by mandating that Indian tribes make payments to local governments. Indian tribes are recognized as sovereigns in the Constitution and under existing law, sovereign tribes negotiate with sovereign states, not town councils. This provision reverses 200 years of Indian policy.

Third, the bill is wrong because it unfairly does away with the existing provisions that recognize historic Indian land claims, some of which have been pending for decades.

Finally, the bill is wrong because landless, restored, and acknowledged Tribes will be treated as second-class sovereigns. Before they can use their lands, these tribes would have to jump through many new hoops: the Secretary of the Interior, the State Governor, and local governments must all agree before they can even open a bingo hall.

While the Committee tried to improve the local government provision, its effort to provide mandatory arbitration between tribal and local governments is unconstitutional because it forces a state subdivision to participate in a Federal regulatory regime.

“While the House Resources Committee left the door open for many off-reservation projects through a grandfather clause and other amendments adopted today, some tribes were arbitrarily cut-off. Some of those had the support of the State Governor and local communities. The arbitrary lines drawn by the bill once again show that Congress should stop this bill and let the Secretary do his job,” said Ernest L. Stevens, Jr., Chairman, National Indian Gaming Association.

The National Indian Gaming Association is a non-profit trade association comprised of 184 American Indian Nations and other nonvoting associate members. The mission of NIGA is to advance the lives of Indian people economically, socially and politically. NIGA operates as a clearinghouse and educational, legislative and public policy resource for tribes, policymakers and the public on Indian gaming issues, sovereignty and tribal community development.

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