

**Testimony of Ernest Stevens, Jr., Chairman, National Indian Gaming Association  
Oversight Hearing on the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act  
Before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, July 25, 2001**

Good Morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. My name is Ernest Stevens, Jr. and I serve as Chairman of the National Indian Gaming Association. I am a member of the Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin. NIGA is a non-profit association of 168 Indian Tribes dedicated to preserving tribal sovereignty and the inherent right of tribal governments to operate gaming enterprises to raise governmental revenue.<sup>1</sup>

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today concerning Indian gaming and the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988 (IGRA). To begin with, I will testify about some issues that should be addressed under IGRA, the strength of tribal regulatory systems and the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC). Then I will discuss the benefits that Indian gaming has produced for Indian Tribes and neighboring communities.

**Indian Gaming Regulatory Act Issues**

The purposes of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act are to promote strong tribal governments, economic development, and self-sufficiency and to establish a statutory basis to protect Indian gaming as a means of generating tribal government revenue. 25 U.S.C. sec. 2702. IGRA also recognized that Indian Tribes have the inherent authority to engage in gaming for governmental purposes.

IGRA establishes three classes of gaming: Class I gaming is traditional tribal gaming; Class II gaming is bingo, pull-tabs and related games; and Class III gaming is casino, lottery and parimutuel gaming. Class I gaming is regulated exclusively by Indian Tribes. Class II gaming is regulated by Indian Tribes and the NIGC. Class III gaming is intended to be primarily regulated by Tribes and States through the Class III compacting process, together with the support of the NIGC by approving tribal ordinances, reviewing management contracts, reviewing tribal licenses of key employees, and gaming management personnel.

***Seminole* and the Secretarial Procedures in Lieu of a Compact**

In 1996, the Supreme Court decided *Seminole Tribe v. State of Florida*, 116 S. Ct. 1114 (1996). The Supreme Court explained that through the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, Congress granted the States an opportunity and obligation to negotiate in good faith for Class III Tribal-State gaming compacts. This is an opportunity generally withheld

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<sup>1</sup> 196 of the 561 Indian Tribes in the United States engage in Indian gaming to fund governmental services and promote economic development. In other words, somewhat less than 40% of Indian Tribes engage in gaming. By comparison, 37 of the 50 States employ gaming to fund governmental services and promote economic development. In other words, over 70% of the States engage in gaming.

from States under the U.S. Constitution, which acknowledges an exclusive relationship between Indian tribes and the federal government. *Seminole*, 116 S. Ct. at 1126.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the Court held that Congress had no authority under the Commerce Clause to waive the States' 11<sup>th</sup> Amendment immunity. This left Indian Tribes with a right to good faith negotiations to secure a Class III Tribal-State gaming compact, but with no remedy to enforce such rights.

In 1999, the Secretary of the Interior promulgated regulations, which provide that an Indian Tribe may request the Secretary to issue Class III gaming procedures in lieu of a compact if, after 180 days of negotiation with the State, no compact has been agreed to, and the Tribe has filed a "good faith" lawsuit in Federal court, the State raised an 11<sup>th</sup> Amendment defense, and the Federal court dismissed the case. These *Seminole*-fix regulations, further provide that the Secretary may appoint a mediator to assist the Tribe and the State in resolving outstanding issues, and provides timeframes for possible issuance of Class III gaming procedures if no agreement may be reached.

NIGA and its Member Tribes firmly believe that the Secretary's regulations on this issue fully reflect the intent of Congress in enacting the IGRA. Senator McCain stated at the time of the passage of the Act:

I would like to serve notice that I, Senator Inouye, Senator Evans, and other members of the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs will be watching very carefully what happens in Indian Country. If the states take advantage of this relationship, the so-called compacts, then I would be one of the first to appear before my colleagues and work to repeal this legislation because we must ensure that the Indians are given a level playing field that are the same as the states in which they reside and will not be prevented from doing so because of the self-interest of the states in which they reside.

Senator John McCain, Cong. Rec. (Sept. 15, 1988). We call upon the Senate Committee to support and to ratify the Secretary's regulations to ensure that Tribes are treated with fairness in Class III Tribal-State compact negotiations. This Committee never intended the States to have a veto power over the compacting process.

### **The Regulation of Indian Gaming**

Indian gaming is the most highly regulated form of gaming in the Nation. Tribal gaming is subject to regulation from three jurisdictions: Tribal, State, and Federal. Tribes

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<sup>2</sup> The Court stated, "[T]he Indian Commerce Clause accomplishes a greater transfer of power from the States to the Federal Government than does the Interstate Commerce Clause. This is clear enough from the fact that the States still exercise some authority over interstate trade but have been divested of virtually all authority over Indian commerce and Indian tribes."

regulate their own gaming operations through Tribal gaming commissions, Compliance officers, Tribal law enforcement officers, and Tribal courts. States regulate Tribal gaming at a level negotiated through tribal/state compacts. Certain Tribes, like the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe in Nevada, have negotiated compacts that provide for direct state regulation. In other states, like Arizona, the state regulators play a supportive oversight role and work closely with tribal regulators to ensure the integrity of Indian gaming.

The National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) is the primary regulator at the federal level, providing a background level of oversight, and reviewing the licensing of gaming management and key employees, management contracts, and tribal gaming ordinances. The NIGC also monitors Class II gaming under the Act. In addition, the NIGC has established Minimum Internal Control Standards (MICS) for Indian gaming, based on New Jersey and other gaming standards, and Tribal Governments have actively complied with the MICS. The MICS address audits, cash and credit procedures, surveillance, electronic data processing, gaming devices, bingo, pull-tabs, card and table games, and pari-mutuel wagering.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the Secretary of the Interior oversees the Tribal-State compact process, reviewing and approving compacts provided that they are consistent with the Act and the Federal trust responsibility.

In 1994, Congress acted to protect Indian gaming through the Money Laundering Suppression Act, which applies the Bank Secrecy Act's protective provisions to Indian gaming operations. Under the Act, tribal operations report currency transactions in excess of \$10,000 to the Department of Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN). FinCEN is the Federal Agency charged with preventing money laundering. NIGA has worked actively with FinCEN to ensure that Indian Tribes have the most up-to-date information on how to prevent money laundering. FinCEN representatives met with NIGA's Member Tribes at our April 2001 Trade Show.

The FBI and the Justice Department also have responsibility for regulating Indian gaming. Under the United States Criminal Code, 18 U.S.C. § 1163, anyone who embezzles or steals money or property from an Indian gaming facility or any other Indian establishment is guilty of a federal felony, punishable by up to 5 years in prison.

The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act recognizes that Indian Tribes will serve as the primary regulators of Indian gaming. Tribes serve as the daily on-the-spot regulators of Indian gaming. Over the past decade, Tribes have developed world-class regulatory systems. In 1998, a NIGA survey indicated that 147 Tribes engaged in gaming spent over \$120 million on gaming regulation. NIGA is in the process of conducting a survey of current tribal regulation of Indian gaming. To date, with a regression analysis based on 36% of tribal gaming commissions responding, we estimate that Tribes spend in excess of \$150 million on gaming regulation. We hope to complete our survey by September, and will provide the Committee our survey results at that time. However,

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<sup>3</sup> Right now, the NIGC is working with an Advisory Committee to update these regulations to take into account new technological developments.

data available today shows that Tribal gaming regulation is on par with or exceeds the resources spent on gaming regulation in New Jersey and Nevada.

According to a 1998 GAO Report, Nevada employed about 400 regulatory personnel with a budget of \$22 million to regulate 2,425 gaming locations (80% with less than 15 machines). New Jersey spent about \$54 million to employ 700 regulatory employees to cover 12 major casinos, with over 35,000 machines and 1,400 table games. U.S. GAO Report, Casino Gaming Regulation: The Roles of 5 States and the National Indian Gaming Commission, (May 1998).

By way of comparison, 15 Arizona Indian Tribes operate medium-sized facilities, with between 400 to 1,500 machines. These Tribes invest \$21 million annually to employ over 200 tribal regulatory personnel. Arizona Tribes pay an additional \$5 million for state regulation to the Arizona Department of Gaming, which employs 60 state regulatory staff. The Oneida Nation of New York spends approximately \$9 million on regulation for its gaming operation, of which \$3.3 million goes to the State of New York as part of their regulatory presence.

Against this background of comprehensive regulation, the FBI and the Justice Department have repeatedly reported that there has been no substantial infiltration of organized crime on Indian gaming. After two years of public hearings held throughout the Nation, the National Gambling Impact Study Commission confirmed the Justice Department's finding.

### **National Indian Gaming Commission Staffing**

The National Indian Gaming Commission has more than doubled its personnel over the last three years. With 77 employees and 5 field offices and an annual budget of \$8 million, the National Indian Gaming Commission is fully equipped to handle its key responsibilities: approving tribal gaming ordinances, reviewing tribal management and key employee licenses, reviewing management contracts, and providing secondary oversight of Indian gaming.

Of course, the NIGC must recognize, as Congress did, that Indian Tribes retain their inherent rights "to regulate gaming activity on Indian lands if the gaming activity is not specifically prohibited by Federal law and is in a State, which does not, as a matter of criminal law and public policy, prohibit such activity." 25 U.S.C. § 2701(5). Tribal gaming regulators stand ready to assist the NIGC, and should be respected. Therefore, when the NIGC receives information about a potential violation of the statute or NIGC regulations, the Commission should notify the tribal gaming regulatory body and defer to the tribal regulatory process. Exhaustion of tribal regulatory processes provides respect for tribal sovereignty and avoids unnecessary duplication of efforts at the Federal and tribal level.

## **NIGC Minimum Internal Control Standards**

As noted above, the NIGC has promulgated regulations that set Minimum Internal Control Standards (MICS) for Indian gaming, based on New Jersey, Nevada, and other gaming standards. Tribal Governments have actively complied with the MICS. The MICS address audits, cash and credit procedures, surveillance, electronic data processing, gaming devices, bingo, pull-tabs, card and table games, and pari-mutuel wagering.

A number of Indian Tribes have pointed out that the IGRA provides for the NIGC to exercise “continuous oversight” of Class II gaming. In contrast, Congress intended Class III gaming to be regulated pursuant to Tribal-State gaming compacts. Because of this fact, the relationship between the NIGC and tribal regulatory systems over Class III gaming is not clearly addressed. Regardless, Tribes have complied with the MICS in good faith and have developed world-class regulatory systems that fully comply with those detailed requirements.

The NIGC must work closely with tribal regulatory bodies to ensure that tribal sovereignty is respected. The Commission should defer to tribal regulatory systems in the first instance to avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts. The NIGC must also acknowledge that Tribal-State Class III gaming compact requirements are the primary means of regulating class III gaming, and the MICS are secondary. In sum, the NIGC must recognize the legitimacy and efficacy of tribal regulatory systems.

The NIGC is currently undertaking a review of its MICS in conjunction with an advisory committee to ensure that the regulations are effective without unduly burdening Indian gaming operations. The MICS should expressly recognize tribal regulatory systems as the primary regulators of Indian gaming. The NIGC should promulgate minimum standards that set forth principles for sound regulation at a level of generality that provides protections for Indian gaming operations without interfering with tribal regulatory making authority. The MICS should also distinguish between Class II and Class III operations, which are different in scope and complexity and which receive different statutory treatment.

## **NIGC Proposed Environmental Regulations**

In our view, the NIGC should stay close to its core mission of regulating Indian gaming. Recently, the Commission proposed environment, public health and safety regulations that it plans to impose on Indian gaming operations. IGRA’s reference to these standards is set forth in a provision concerning NIGC approval of tribal gaming ordinances.

Tribal governments already have ordinances that protect the environment, public health and safety. Tribes work with the EPA on environmental issues, HHS’ Indian Health Service on health issues, and the Departments of the Interior and Justice on public safety issues. There is simply no need for the NIGC to develop another federal bureaucracy in these areas. In fact, the EPA submitted comment to the NIGC to explain

that it already works with Tribes on environmental issues and there is no need to duplicate efforts. If anything, the NIGC should sit down with Tribes to develop voluntary guidelines that tribal government agencies can implement directly.

## **Class II Gaming and Technologic Aides**

In its initial definitional regulations under the IGRA, the NIGC improperly defined “electronic or electromechanical facsimile” as any gambling device as defined in the Johnson Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1171(a)(2) or (3). Several Federal appellate courts have made clear that the NIGC definition is inconsistent with the terms of the IGRA. In *Diamond Games v. Reno*, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit stated:

[T]he Commission’s IGRA regulations provide no assistance in interpreting the statute. Boiled down to their essence, the regulations tell us little more than that a Class II aide is something that is not a Class III facsimile.

230 F.3d 365, 369 (D.C. Cir. 2000). In light of this consistent line of decisions from the federal courts,<sup>4</sup> the NIGC wisely decided to revise its regulatory definitions to eliminate the reference to the Johnson Act in the definition of “electronic facsimile.”

Reference to the Johnson Act in this context was clearly mistaken. Clearly, Congress intended Indian Tribes to have reasonable latitude to employ technologic aides to Class II gaming, such as bingo terminals or paper pull-tab dispensers, so long as the game remained essentially a Class II game. As this Committee noted in enacting the IGRA, Tribes must have “the opportunity to take advantage of modern methods of conducting class II games and the language regard technology is designed to provide maximum flexibility.” The NIGC’s effort to correct its earlier mistake should be supported.

Finally, as we stated in our comment to the NIGC, “NIGA supports this proposal as a proper first step that would help clarify and stabilize this area of gaming law, and remove the conflict between the Commission’s regulation definitions and the purposes of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA).”

## **Overview: Indian Gaming Works for America**

The results achieved by Indian Tribes through gaming have been amazing. Indian gaming generates gross revenues of approximately \$9.6 billion annually for tribal

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<sup>4</sup> See generally *Diamond Game Enterprises, Inc. v. Reno*, 230 F.3d 365 (D.C. Cir. Nov. 3, 2000); *United States v. 162 Megamania Gambling Devices*, 231 F.3d 713 (10<sup>th</sup> Cir. Oct. 31, 2000); *United States v. 103 Electronic Gambling Devices*, 223 F.3d 1091 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. Aug. 29, 2000).

governments. From this gross revenue figure, Tribes pay for expenses such as payroll, management costs, marketing, public relations, capitalization costs, tribal, state, and Federal regulatory fees, revenue sharing agreements, and other expenses. Indian gaming means jobs, economic activity, and economic development for Indian Tribes and their neighbors.

### **250,000 Jobs**

Indian gaming has created 250,000 jobs nationwide for Indians and their non-Indian neighbors. These jobs are terribly important for Indian country. In some of our rural areas, like South Dakota, the state generally has an unemployment rate that is below the national rate of 4.5%, yet, on rural Indian reservations, the unemployment rates are 60% or higher. On rural reservations, Indian gaming jobs address these unbearably high unemployment rates. For example, in North and South Dakota, Indian gaming has created about 5,000 jobs and Indians hold about 75% of those jobs. Many of those folks never had a job opportunity before. In my own state of Wisconsin, Indian gaming has proven to be the best welfare to work program: Indian gaming has caused welfare rolls to drop dramatically in rural counties near gaming establishments. The Wisconsin Department of Health and Human Services reported in 1996 that welfare payments dropped by over 28% from 1990 to 1995 in Wisconsin counties with Indian gaming. That represented a decrease of over \$11 million in Wisconsin welfare payments.

### **Tribal Infrastructure and Governmental Programs**

IGRA mandates that Indian gaming revenue be used only for tribal governmental services, community and economic development, general tribal welfare, charitable causes, and aid to neighboring governments. Using tribal gaming revenue, Indian Tribes are developing their governmental infrastructure by building schools, health clinics, water and sewer systems, and roads. Indian country has frequently been left behind in terms of infrastructure and community development, and Tribes are using their gaming revenue to fund basic community infrastructure. The Gila River Tribe built a new water system. The Ak-Chin Indian Community is building new reservation housing. The Cabazon Band established a tribal utility authority and Spirit Lake built a wind energy generator. Fort McDowell built a police substation. The Sycuan Band of Kumeyaay built a new community library, and the Southern Ute Tribe built towers for its public radio station.

Education is a top priority for Tribes, and Indian gaming revenue is frequently used to build education facilities. My Tribe, for example, built our school in the shape of a Turtle with our creation story inscribed on its walls, so our students can learn our language and culture as they work to master basic courses such as math, science and literature. The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe in Minnesota have built two schools. Mille Lacs requires their students to be fluent in the Ojibwe language by the time they graduate from high school.

Health care is another important issue in Indian country, and many of our member Tribes have invested gaming revenues in health care infrastructure. Saginaw Chippewa

in Michigan, for example, built a 50,000 square foot health facility for tribal members and employees. Oklahoma Choctaw built a new hospital. The Cachil Dehe Band of Wintun Indians built a new medical and dental facility. Shakopee Sioux funded a new family birthing center. The Gila River Tribe in Arizona recently opened a new dialysis center to deal with the highest rate of diabetes in the world. And the Tesuque Pueblo also opened a wellness center to help its members prevent diabetes.

Tribal gaming revenues also fund education, childcare, health care, elderly nutrition, and police and fire protection programs. For example, the Rosebud Sioux Tribe funds child care, so mothers can work, and because Rosebud is located in one of the poorest counties in the Nation, the Tribe appropriates funds for new school clothes for needy children every September. Indian gaming is funding some very basic needs. The Sandia Pueblo in New Mexico funds an in-home elderly hospice care program for its elders and after school programs for its children. The Southern Ute Tribe funds emergency medical services. The Miccosukee Tribe funds its police force, and the Fort McDowell Tribe funds a legal services program for tribal members. The Tohono O'odham Nation funds a drug interdiction program along its border with Mexico.

### **Building Sound Tribal Economies**

Through gaming, Tribes beginning to diversify their economies. Indian gaming has given tribes access to a necessary ingredient for economic development that's been lacking before: CAPITAL! Tribal casino profits are being invested directly into on-reservation shopping centers, recreation parks, facilities for producing and exporting non-gaming related products and services. Many Tribes have developed hotels, RV parks, gas stations, restaurants, convention centers, movie theaters, retail centers, and golf courses. The San Manuel Band is building a bottled water plant. The Cabazon Band built a tire recycling facility that will process 2 million tires this year. The Viejas Band built an outlet mall. The Cachile Dehe Band of Wintun Indians has established an agriculture program that provides jobs to tribal members and migrant workers. Mille Lacs created the Small Business development program to provide technical assistance, training and loans to Indian entrepreneurs.

More importantly, the "Second Wave" of non-gaming related businesses that are less dependent upon gaming customers has begun. This wave emphasizes off-reservation and international markets.

### **Indian Tribes are Good Neighbors**

Indian gaming also benefits neighboring communities. In upstate New York, an air force base was closed with a loss of over 2,000 jobs. The Oneida Nation outside of Syracuse, New York opened its casino soon after and later added a hotel, restaurants, and an award winning golf course, creating over 3,000 jobs. After a large ship manufacturing plant closed in northern Connecticut with a loss of 12,000 jobs, the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe opened its Foxwoods Casino and Resort, which created 14,000 area jobs. Nationally, non-Indians hold 3 of 4 jobs created by Indian gaming. Non-Indians who

hold these jobs appreciate the full-time positions. And, our Indian gaming patrons, both Indian and non-Indian, appreciate the entertainment and services at our facilities. It means a lot to a rural community in Louisiana, Minnesota, or New Mexico to have an entertainment outlet, which may include a hotel, restaurant, events center, and a golf course.

NIGA's Member Tribes work with neighboring communities to defray the costs of increased traffic brought about by gaming facilities under agreements with neighboring jurisdictions. For example, the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan Tribes in Connecticut pay Connecticut over \$300 million annually under a revenue sharing agreement and the state then distributes about half of these funds to local governments. My own Tribe, the Oneida of Wisconsin, has government services agreements with our local governments, which I helped negotiate.

Moreover, although Indian Tribes as governments are not taxable entities, they generate substantial Federal, State, and local revenue through payroll, social security, and other taxes. A 1999 industry study by the Evans Group reports that:

Federal tax receipts, based on the rise in receipts from social insurance taxes, personal income taxes, and corporate income taxes, plus the decline in unemployment benefits, rose by over \$3.6 billion in 1998 because of Indian gaming.

Indian gaming casinos generated more than an additional \$1.0 billion in fees and related revenue sharing payments to state governments in 1998.

Evans Group, The Economic Impact of Indian Casino Gaming, (1999).

NIGA also recently did a study of charitable giving by Indian Tribes. We found that Indian Tribes gave over \$68 million to charity. The Shakopee Sioux, for example, donated over \$2 million to its county government neighbors for road construction during the last two years. The Pechanga Band in California announced that it is paying its local government neighbor over \$7 million for road construction. The Agua Caliente Band recently donated two fire trucks to its local government, Palm Springs. Other Tribes have funded hospitals, education programs, and other governmental projects.

### **Indian Gaming Produces Benefits Throughout Indian Country**

There are many Indian Tribes that do not engage in gaming. Some, like many of the Native Villages of Alaska and the majority of Tribes in Nevada, do not have the market access necessary to make gaming an viable economic alternative. Others, like the Navajo Nation, have chosen for cultural reasons to forego gaming. Yet, it is not fair to say that these Tribes have not benefited from Indian gaming.

Many Indian Tribes use gaming revenues to assist other Tribes. For example, the Forest County Potawatomi Tribe assists the Red Cliff Band and the Sokoagan Band of Chippewa on an ongoing basis, and underwrites Milwaukee Indian school for the benefit of all Indians in the Milwaukee area. The Mashantucket Pequot Tribe is working with a consortium of Indian Tribes to start a Native American development bank. The Mohegan Tribe has generously assisted other Tribes in times of trouble. The Shakopee Sioux Tribe has frequently assisted its sister Sioux Tribes. Under compacts negotiated in California, California Tribes engaged in gaming have created a fund to assist non-gaming Tribes and Arizona Tribes are considering another approach to assist non-gaming Tribes, including the Navajo Nation.

In addition, NIGA has worked with non-gaming Tribes and Indian economic development associations to promote business between Indian gaming operations and other Indian enterprises. At our most recent trade show, the Yakima Indian Nation offered their renowned apples for sale to Indian casinos, the Northwest fishing Tribes displayed their salmon products, and the InterTribal Bison Cooperative displayed their bison products. Indian gaming provides economic opportunities that benefit Indian country broadly.

Nevertheless, as this Committee knows, Indian gaming is not a panacea. The Census Bureau reports that 700,000 Indians live in poverty, and that includes 43% of American Indian and Alaska Native children under the age of 5 who live in poverty. Less than 50% of our high school students graduate, and we continue to suffer epidemic problems of heart disease, liver disease, and diabetes.

After two hundred years of genocide, abuse and neglect, Indian gaming is only beginning to rebuild our communities, and as one senior Senator familiar with Indian country told us recently, “Not every Indian will find a job through Indian gaming.” So, the United States must continue to work with Indian Tribes to help make Indian lands “livable” homes as it has repeatedly promised in Treaties and Statutes. In short, the Federal Government must continue to honor its trust responsibility to promote tribal economic development through Indian gaming and other means.

## **Conclusion**

The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act has generally proved to be workable for Indian country. Yet, the Supreme Court’s *Seminole* decision has interfered with the operation of the Class III Tribal-State Compact process, so Congress should support Interior’s regulations for Secretarial procedures in lieu of a compact.

Indian gaming is the most highly regulated form of gaming in the Nation, and Tribes have developed world-class regulatory systems deserving of respect. Overall, Tribes spend more than \$150 million on regulation, and Congress should acknowledge the capacity and effectiveness of tribal regulatory systems. The NIGC is adequately funded to perform their statutorily delegated Federal oversight role and should not attempt to become the primary regulator of Indian gaming, intruding on tribal self-

government. The NIGC should adhere to its core mission. The Commission's proposed Environment, Public Health and Safety Regulations should be revised to serve as voluntary guidelines rather than regulations, and this effort should be coordinated with Tribes and the EPA to avoid duplication of services. The NIGC's efforts to correct its Class II gaming technology regulations should be supported.

Perhaps the most important point is that Indian gaming has served to build strong tribal governments, and promote tribal economic self-sufficiency. Tribes now have schools, health clinics, water systems, and roads that exist only because of Indian gaming. Tribes have a long way to go because too many of our people continue to live with disease and poverty, but Indian gaming offers hope for the future.