

**STATEMENT
OF
SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUE
VICE CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
BEFORE THE
SEPTEMBER 29, 2004
HEARING
ON
TRIBAL LOBBYING MATTERS**

For the past seven months, newspapers and journals of national renown have been reporting on the findings of their research into allegations that Indian tribal governments have engaged the services of professional lobbyists and so-called grass roots organizations and the costs associated with those contracts.

Some have asserted that the amounts charged to tribes have been excessive, or that revenues received by those employed by the tribal governments far exceeded the value of the products and services provided to the tribes.

Sadly, excessive fees and large profits are part of everyday life in our nation's capital - and ordinarily they do not amount to a violation of Federal law.

With that in mind however, if the allegations of interference in the election processes of tribal governments and the purposeful manipulation of circumstances to solicit business from the tribes are proven to be accurate, we will have to explore whether any of the actions taken are violations of criminal law.

Today, the Committee is delving into just two of a series of dealings with at least six Indian tribal governments, and as I understand it, there will be further hearings to follow this one.

I join my colleagues on the Committee today to listen and to learn what may have taken place, and whether the activities described constitute a pattern and practice of dealings that are either inappropriate or illegal.

I fully support my Chairman in his decision to initiate this investigation, because if proven true, the allegations are by any measure deeply troubling and profoundly serious.

It saddens me that after the glorious events of last week, when thousands of Native people came to our national mall to celebrate the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian, and what we all hope to be the beginning page of a new chapter in this nation's relations with the First Americans, that we must now turn our attention to something that at a minimum appears to be another most unseemly manifestation of the exploitation of the Native people of this land.

This is not a happy matter, and I think I would rather be almost anywhere else today, but as members of the Senate's Committee on Indian Affairs, we take our responsibilities seriously, and so I - as I suspect all of my colleagues on this Committee will do - will reserve judgment until all of the facts are brought to light.