

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

November 2, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke,

We write in support of the October 31, 2017 request by the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan Tribes (Tribes) for the Department of the Interior to publish notice of approval of the amendments to the Tribes' compacts with the State of Connecticut. We concur with the legal points raised by the Tribes.

We appreciate Associate Deputy Secretary James Cason and other Interior staff taking the time last week to hear our concerns regarding the September 15, 2017 letter from Acting Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Michael Black returning the compact amendments without express approval or rejection. Given the importance of this issue to us and our State, we wanted to share our views and support directly with you.

As we discussed at that meeting, the state of Connecticut entered into these compacts more than 20 years ago. Since that time, pursuant to these compacts, the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan Tribes have operated casino gaming and provided the state of Connecticut with a percentage of slot machine revenues. In return, the state of Connecticut has agreed not to authorize the operation of additional casino gaming within the legal jurisdiction of the state.

This arrangement is consistent with the statutory language and intent of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) to provide federally recognized Native American tribes with the ability to operate gaming for the economic benefit of the Tribe. And it is clear that the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan Tribes have benefited from this arrangement along with the state of Connecticut.

The genesis of the compact amendments is the desire of the state of Connecticut to authorize an additional casino operation within Connecticut borders. This is a decision based on the state's review of its gaming policies, the impact on the people of Connecticut and the state budget.

This third casino does not fall within IGRA and therefore does not need approval or authorization from the Department of the Interior. However, in order to clarify that the proposed third casino operation would not implicate the existing compact provisions, the Tribes and the State determined that it would be in the best interests of the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan Tribes along with the State of Connecticut for the compact language to be amended.

The proposed amendments merely clarify that the operation of a third casino as contemplated in Public Act 17-89 would not affect the existing agreements between the State of Connecticut and the Tribes.

The only question before the Department of the Interior is whether to approve the clarifying amendments to the Compacts indicating that the Tribes' agreements with the state are unaffected by the operation of a casino pursuant to Public Act 17-89. The decision to seek the Department's review of these amendments was informed, in part, through a series of consultations and correspondence between the Tribes and the department over the course of nearly two years, including just a couple of months ago. Nothing in the Department's approval of such amendments would actually authorize an additional casino in Connecticut. The approval simply means that if an additional casino owned and operated jointly by the Tribes is authorized by the state of Connecticut, it would not affect the existing agreements.

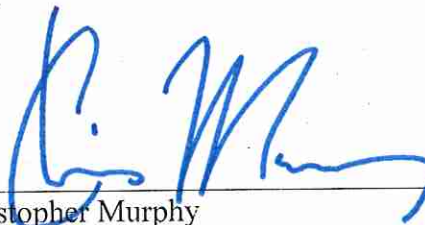
Finally, we strongly believe that publication of the September 15, 2017 letter is in the best interest of the Department given the serious legal and regulatory questions that are raised in this matter. As important, publication would fulfill the Department's tribal trust responsibility by continuing the current relationship between the Tribes and the State of Connecticut that has provided extraordinary economic development to the Tribes, consistent with the provisions of IGRA. Department of the Interior approval would merely continue this beneficial Tribal-State relationship.

We hope this clarifies the current situation in Connecticut and urge you to publish the approval of such amendments.

Very truly yours,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL  
United States Senator



Christopher Murphy  
United States Senator

*Joe Courtney*

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JOE COURTNEY  
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Associate Deputy Secretary James Cason