

Fort Belknap Indian Community



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June 14, 2010

Fort Belknap Indian Community
(Tribal Govt.)
Fort Belknap Indian Community
(Elected to administer the affairs of the community and
to represent the Assiniboine and the Gros Ventre
Tribes of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation)

Jacqueline Johnson Pata
Executive Director
National Congress of American Indians
1516 P Street NW
Washington D.C. 20005

RE: Letter of Support- Cobell Settlement

Dear Ms. Pata:

It has come to our attention that on Friday, June 11, 2010 a letter was sent by the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) to the offices of various Senators supporting the Barrasso Amendment No. 4313 to the American Jobs and Closing Tax Loopholes Act of 2010. Given the widespread support by individual allottees and NCAI's usually way of conducting business by Resolution after taking it to the full membership, the Fort Belknap Indian Community (FBIC) was very surprised to learn of this last minute, ill-advised act by NCAI. The potential damage to the Cobell settlement caused by your decision to act on behalf of individual allottees will be felt and borne by individual allottees, not NCAI.

Please be advised that the Fort Belknap Indian Community continues its support of the Cobell settlement on behalf of individual allottees and is NOT in support of the amendments proposed by Senator Barrasso or his Congressional staff. We will further express our opposition to your action to our Montana legislators and at the upcoming NCAI meeting in Rapid City, SD.

The FBIC also is concerned of the negative impact on tribal trust suits should the Cobell Settlement fail. While it is easy for others to deny such an impact, history and reality shows that such matters oftentimes are intertwined in terms of settlement. For what is a tribe without its members and why would there be damages found for a tribal government when the individuals who were wronged were not compensated in any manner? Why would the breach of the trust responsibility be more important for the tribal government than for its individual members?

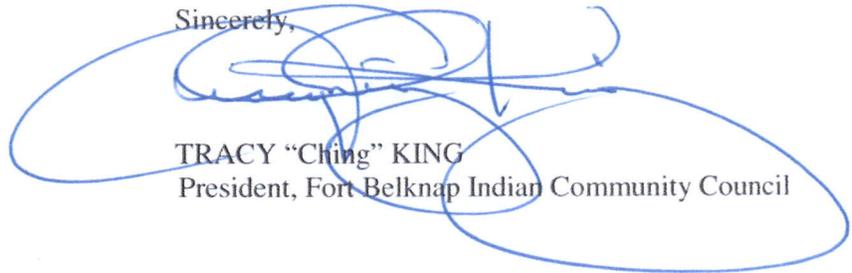
Although your June 11, 2010 states that NCAI understands and appreciates the efforts of Ms. Cobell to reach settlement, we are wondering why you are bringing up your concerns at the last minute and in a manner not usually used by NCAI: by letter rather than Resolution. However, even a Resolution might not reflect consensus policy solely from large Trust Asset holding Tribes and Tribal Members since having an IIM account is not a prerequisite to membership and voting rights within NCAI. And while we recognize the importance of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians and the Great Plains Tribal Chairman's Association, and respect their positions, they do not speak for the FBIC or other Tribes that were not made aware of your actions.

The FBIC realizes that the settlement amount is not the amount that should be paid for the egregious actions of our trustee. However, many allottees that were harmed have now passed on, taking with them the hope to receive any kind of acknowledgement of wrongdoing or compensation for same. The Cobell settlement goes beyond the monetary settlement. It is a part of a long history of wrongdoings, only this time with a little dignity restored. The unfortunate reality is that no one will be fully compensated.

Therefore, the FBIC implores the NCAI to get back on track and continue its advocacy on behalf of ALL Indians, not just a political few. The FBIC fully supports the June 9, 2010 letter from US Attorney General Eric Holder and Secretary of the Interior to Senators Reid and McConnell.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



TRACY "Ching" KING
President, Fort Belknap Indian Community Council

Xc: Senator Max Baucus, Senator for Montana
Senator Jon Tester, Senator for Montana
Senator Byron Dorgan, Chairman, SCIA
Senator John Barrasso, Vice Chairman, SCIA
Jefferson Keel, President, NCAI
Members, FBIC Council