



City of Phoenix
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

MAYOR PHIL GORDON

May 7, 2009

Ken Salazar, Secretary
United States Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Re: Tohono O'odham Nation Proposed Casino in Glendale, Arizona

Dear Secretary Salazar:

The Tohono O'odham Nation has filed an application with your Department seeking approval for establishment of a 134-acre federal Indian reservation in Maricopa County – near the borders of the city of Glendale, Arizona – with the purpose of constructing and operating a full-scale casino operation. As the Mayor of the city of Phoenix, Arizona, I oppose this effort and respectfully request that you deny this application.

Development of the West Valley Resort and Casino, the name assigned to the project by the Nation, will create a conflict between Arizona's tribal communities and residents of the state. In 2002, voters approved the Indian Gaming Preservation and Self-Reliance Act, a statewide measure that granted Native American tribes the exclusive right to operate casino gaming on federally-designated reservation lands. This Act governs many aspects of these gaming operations, such as the number of slot machines, types of games, and revenue sharing components. Voters were told there would be no increase in the number of casinos in the Phoenix area and that they would be limited to current reservation lands.

Arizona has, until now, been free of "reservation shopping," the practice of gaming tribes building casinos on property that is not within their traditional lands but in or near large urban centers. The impact of adding a casino in Maricopa County, which already hosts a number of other tribal casinos, needs to be thoroughly evaluated.

I also believe that this does not comply with federal law, which only allows new gaming operations on reservation lands established prior to October 17, 1988. The federal law also requires that input from state, local, and nearby tribal communities be considered before approval of gaming operations under these circumstances (25 United States Code Section 2719(b)(1)(A)).

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I have long supported Indian gaming as a valuable tool to address education, health care, housing and other basic services for tribal members. Nonetheless, if a new gaming facility operated by a remote tribal community is to set up shop in the heart of our urban area, I have a responsibility to Phoenix's 1.5 million residents to ensure that the endeavor will not negatively impact their lives and community.

I respectfully urge you to deny this application. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have regarding this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phil Gordon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Phil Gordon
Mayor