



National Congress of American Indians

NCAI News

July 16, 2002

(Broadcast # 02-052)

*** ACTION ALERT *** ACTION ALERT *** ACTION ALERT ***

Interior Approps Rule Protects Provisions Harmful to Tribes -- In a late night session, the House Rules committee agreed to a rule on the House Interior Appropriations Bill (H.R. 5093) that would protect harmful provisions on Indian Trust Reform as well as Rep. Wolf's proposal to create a "Commission on Native American Policy." Tribes are opposed to both the Trust Reform provisions and the creation of the commission, and the co-chairs of the Congressional Native American Caucus, Dale Kildee (D-MI) and J.D. Hayworth (R-AZ) had urged the Rules committee not to protect the provisions.

We understand that Representative Nick Rahall (D-WV) plans to offer two amendments to attack these harmful provisions. The first amendment will deal with the trust reform items, and will delete language that will do the following:

1. Limit the historical accounting of Indian trust funds from 1985 to 2000, with a stipulation that accounts before 1985 are presumed to be correct in spite of documented inconsistencies; and will not account for funds closed as of December of 2000.
2. Require disclosure of court-sealed documents that may subject DOI officials to contempt of court charges.
3. Restrict the compensation of court appointed officials.
4. Order a new advisory board to oversee Indian trust reform efforts
5. Authorize the DOI to pay current and former employees' private legal fees associated with the Cobell cases.

The second amendment will strike Rep. Wolf's language creating a Commission of Native American Policy that will allow the National Governor's Association and the Association of Attorneys General an opportunity to recommend policy on Indian gaming.

Since those provisions go to the floor with the Appropriations bill, our defenders in Congress are planning to offer amendments that will strike the language from the bill. The House plans to take up the bill at 1:30 PM **today**. House staff have indicated that floor debate on the bill will move paragraph-by-paragraph, and they are expecting only one amendment to be raised before the Trust Reform and Commission Amendments come to the floor. They have indicated that debate on our amendments will begin at approximately 2:30 PM.

Given this bill's immediacy, it is imperative that you contact your Members of Congress **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE** to ask them to vote for the amendments striking the trust reform provision and the creation of the commission. Please contact your representatives by phone or fax when you receive this message and ask them to vote for Congressman Rahall's amendments.

If you have any questions, please contact NCAI staff at 202.466.7767.