

Statement of Ben Nighthorse Campbell
Hearing on S.1967
Relating to Lands of the MS Choctaw Tribe
March 29, 2000

Good afternoon. Today we will hear testimony on S.1967, legislation to clarify and make technical changes to the trust land status of lands owned by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.

I will submit my full statement for the record, but I welcome Senator Cochran, Chief Martin, and Assistant Secretary Gover.

It goes without saying that under Chief Martin's leadership the Mississippi Band has become a model for business development, employment and economic self determination that is truly admirable.

The normal way tribes take land into trust is through the BIA's administrative process, and I want to be clear that S.1967 does not signal my desire to have tribes end-run the process, however muddled it is.

S.1967 is a reflection of the unique status of the Band's lands and this bill will clarify that status. I look forward to the testimony today.