

Statement of Ben Nighthorse Campbell
Chairman, Committee on Indian Affairs
Hearing on Indian Trust Resolution Corporation Act of 2000
June 22, 2000

The Committee will come to order. This morning we will receive testimony on a discussion draft bill that I circulated in February, 2000 to Tribal leaders, the Inter-tribal Monitoring Association, the National Congress of American Indians, and the Interior Department. Nothing has been more frustrating to me since becoming Chairman of the Committee in January, 1997, than the lack of progress on reforming the broken trust management system currently in place. There have been endless hearings, numerous GAO reports, and several good-faith attempts at legislative solutions to this problem.

At various times in the process, we witnessed the resignation of the Special Trustee (Paul Homan), we learned that trust documents were shredded, that trust documents were infected with the Hanta Virus, that trust documents were lost, and it goes on and on and on. We have also heard from the Department that with “just more money and more time” trust management problems will be solved.

In my mind enough is enough. I turn your attention to enlarged photo of an 1876 copy of *The Philadelphia Press* with the headline “Indian Trust Fund Losses” and goes on to report on “gross irregularities” in trust management. This has been going on for far too long and the Indians have waited generations for some measure of justice. I do not think if such a scandal involved any other group, there would be the kind of dawdling and neglect that there is with the Indian trust funds situation.

I have reached the conclusion that in this instance the “doctor cannot heal himself” and that *real independence* is needed if the United States is going to live up to its responsibilities to Indian people. I call your attention to the pie chart with poll results conducted by *Indian Country Today*, showing that 80 % of Indians asked said they believe an independent entity is needed to clean up the trust funds mess.

The *Indian Trust Resolution Corporation Act of 2000* will do just that by creating the kind of independent entity that is needed to settle trust claims and bring justice to Indian people across the Nation.