

**STATEMENT
OF
SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUE
CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
BEFORE THE
JULY 18, 2002 HEARING
ON
S. 2743, THE ZUNI INDIAN TRIBE WATER RIGHTS
SETTLEMENT ACT OF 2002**

The Committee meets today to receive testimony on Senate bill S. 2743, a bill to approve the settlement of the water rights claims of the Zuni Indian Tribe in Apache County, Arizona and for other purposes.

On August 28, 1984, the United States established a reservation for the Zuni Indian Tribe in Apache County, Arizona for the purpose of enabling the members of the Zuni Tribe to continue their centuries-old religious and subsistence practices.

In order to sustain life on the reservation, there must be access to water.

However, the water rights of all water users in the Little Colorado River Basin in Arizona have been the subject of an ongoing stream adjudication since 1979.

In an effort to reach a final resolution of the various claims to water rights, the parties that will be affected by this legislation entered into negotiations which have culminated in a settlement agreement.

This legislation would ratify that settlement agreement which provides not only for the resolution of the water rights claims of the Zuni Indian Tribe, but also provides a means for assisting the tribe in acquiring surface water rights, to provide of the tribe's use of groundwater, and to provide for the restoration of wetlands located on the tribe's lands.