

Ben Nighthorse Campbell
Chairman - Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
Hearing on the Native Hawaiian Recognition
February 25, 2003

Good morning. Mr. Vice-Chairman, I will not take up much time with my opening statement other than to say that I have great confidence and faith in your experience and judgment on these matters.

Thank you to our distinguished witnesses for coming such a great distance. Leaving your island paradise to come to the world of ice and snow could not have been easy. I am looking forward to your testimony.

I am very encouraged to have the Honorable Linda Lingle, Governor of the State of Hawaii testify before our Committee in favor of this bill. Let me also congratulate you on your recent election win Governor Lingle.

The members know that we do not often have Governors testifying favorably upon Federal recognition of native groups.

I would also remind the Committee that my friend, Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton, has stated that her department favors recognizing a Native Hawaiian government.

This Committee has found time and again that the best way to improve the lives of native peoples is to turn over to their control the resources dedicated to their benefit. I am certain that Governor Lingle will discover this to be true for Native Hawaiians as well.

At the hearing held on September 14, 2000, several Committee members, including myself, suggested that we should not move too hastily in a matter of such great import as Native Hawaiian recognition.

With today's hearing, the Committee will have held seven *hearings* and passed *two bills* on this matter.

In addition the House Resources Committee has held several hearings and passed two bills - one of which was passed by the House of Representatives.

I think it fair to say we are not moving hastily.

Thank you Mr. Vice-Chairman and I look forward to our witnesses.

* * *