

Remarks of Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell
Chairman - Committee on Indian Affairs
Hearing on the Nomination of Ross O. Swimmer
To Be Special Trustee - American Indians

February 12, 2003

Good morning and welcome to the Committee's first hearing of the 108th Congress.

On February 4, 2003, President Bush submitted to the Senate the nomination of Ross Swimmer to be Special Trustee for American Indians, an office located within the Interior Department.

Mr. Swimmer is an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and as we heard from Senator Nickles and Congressman Carson, Ross Swimmer has had quite a career so far:

- * he has practiced law and been a banker;
- * he was General Counsel and elected Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation;
- * he was the CEO of Cherokee Nation Industries, and later founded the Cherokee Group, LLC;
- * he was co-chairman of President Reagan's Commission on Reservation Economies, and was Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs from 1985-1989.

Mr. Swimmer is currently the Director of the Office of Indian Trust and if confirmed would be the third Special Trustee.

We have received numerous letters regarding this nominee – some opposed, but most supportive of Mr. Swimmer. These and other letters that are received in the next two weeks will be made part of the Record.

At the confirmation hearing of the last Special Trustee, Tom Slonaker, I expressed my frustration with the pace of trust reform.

Here we are two years later and I am not impressed with what has occurred since then:

1. the Trust Funds Task Force failed;
 2. the *Cobell* litigation continues;
 3. Indian account holders have not received one penny;
- and
4. The Federal government continues to spend hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

Something is wrong here and I believe we need a new direction on trust reform.

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With that I am anxious to hear from our witnesses today.

I tell the members that it is not my intention to vote on this nominee at the conclusion of this hearing.