



Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community

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STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE KEITH B. ANDERSON
VICE CHAIRMAN
SHAKOPEE MDEWAKANTON SIOUX COMMUNITY

Oversight Hearing on
Identifying Indian Affairs Priorities
for the Trump Administration

SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
March 8, 2017
2:15 p.m.
628 Dirksen Senate Office Building

INTRODUCTION.

Good afternoon, Chairman Hoeven, Senator Franken, Members of the Committee, Secretary Zinke, fellow tribal leaders.

On behalf of my Shakopee tribal government, I want to thank the Committee for this opportunity to describe our great expectations for –

- What Secretary Zinke will be able to accomplish at the Interior Department, and
- What we hope are priorities for the Trump Administration.

LET ME BEGIN BY SHARING A BIT OF BACKGROUND ON THE SHAKOPEE TRIBE.

For centuries, my Mdewakanton ancestors have lived in the larger area surrounding what remains today of our Shakopee Reservation. We Dakota people have stood our ground, even as the great cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul have grown up around us, bringing both opportunities, and challenges, to our tribal community.

The Shakopee Tribe has played a key role in the economic revitalization of our region. Our tribally-owned and controlled enterprises are a vital source of governmental revenue for ourselves and for many of our neighbors.

For years, the Shakopee Tribe has been the largest employer in Scott County, and regularly is awarded the honor of being one of the “top work places” in Minnesota.

The Shakopee tribal government has forged over 60 inter-governmental agreements with our neighbors, for whom our Tribe provides essential governmental services in such diverse areas as –

- top-flight fire and rescue;
- state-of-the-art waste water treatment;
- alternative wind and solar energy production;
- large-scale organics recycling;
- diverse transportation planning and development; and
- mobile medical and emergency command centers.

The Shakopee Tribe is the largest tribal donor in Indian Country, annually giving 18 million dollars or more in grants to less fortunate Indian tribes and community organizations. In recent years, we have focused our efforts on the production and distribution of food and information that supports healthy lifestyles, contributing over 5 million dollars to efforts to strengthen Native food sovereignty.

“SOVEREIGNTY” IS WHY THE SHAKOPEE TRIBE BELIEVES SECRETARY ZINKE IS WORTHY OF SUPPORT.

From his days in the House of Representatives to the day he was nominated Secretary, Mr. Zinke has shown that tribal sovereignty is at the top of his list of priorities.

As Interior Secretary, Mr. Zinke will fill a key role in the government-to-government relationship with Shakopee and every other tribal government. As lead trustee, Secretary Zinke has a solemn responsibility to honor and protect our sovereignty, self-governance, and self-determination.

All of what the Shakopee Tribe does, for others, and with other governments, rests on one basic foundation – the Shakopee Tribe is a government, a sovereign, worthy of respect by other sovereign governments.

Shakopee is a text book example of the fact that, when tribal governmental sovereignty is respected, economic success follows.

At the same time, any attack on our core tribal identity - any bypassing of our sovereignty as inconvenient - is a direct assault on our culture and way of life.

By definition, tribal sovereignty is expressed and exercised in different ways. Respecting sovereignty means the rest of us honor the decisions each tribe makes for its own people, its own resources, its own territory. Sovereignty is a tribe's shield against the arrogant hegemony of outsiders who think they know what's best for a tribe, whether they are called local governments, conservationists, environmentalists, federal trustees, or hungry corporations.

Secretary Zinke understands and respects tribal sovereignty. The Shakopee Tribe looks forward to working with him and his colleagues in the Trump Administration to preserve and protect tribal sovereignty in ways that advance tribal self-determination and self-sufficiency.

HERE ARE SOME PRIORITIES THAT SECRETARY ZINKE CAN HELP PRESIDENT TRUMP ADDRESS.

President Trump took office a few weeks ago promising change for the regions of America that the federal government has long ignored. By any measure, that includes much of Indian Country.

The Shakopee Tribe will ask Secretary Zinke to ensure that the Trump Administration's infrastructure initiative is shaped to enable Indian Country to catch up to the rest of America. That will mean allocating public funds to extend new infrastructure into rural America so that Native American communities can finally have an equal opportunity to access jobs, markets, education, health and other services on par with the rest of Americans without having to move away from our homelands. It will also mean that Secretary Zinke, as the lead federal trustee for tribes, will have to work hard with every federal agency to ensure they adhere to meaningful consultation with each tribal government affected by a proposed federal action. Meaningful consultation means real, open, early, and responsive mutual decisionmaking in partnership with tribal governments.

We will ask Secretary Zinke, as Indian Country's leading advocate within the Trump Administration, to forcefully support meaningful tax reform that allows only tribal governments – no other governments – to tax economic activity on Indian land. This would end the heavy burden of dual taxation in Indian Country. And it would spur private sector investment in what would be low or no-tax tribal empowerment zones. This kind of bold, big idea would restore the territorial sovereignty of tribal governments over their economies. We will also ask Secretary Zinke to encourage more targeted and robust tax credits for investment in Indian Country.

We will ask Secretary Zinke, as the steward of America's trust responsibility toward Indian tribes and Native Americans, to protect and expand federal financial support for essential governmental services in Indian Country that have been systematically and chronically underfunded for generations. We will encourage Secretary Zinke to make maximum use of

direct funding to tribal governments through the Indian Self-Determination and Tribal Self-Governance authorities, and thereby curb the federal bureaucracy's tendency to consume limited federal funding before it can reach Indian Country. When Secretary Zinke and President Trump face competing pressures to allocate scarce federal funds, we will ask Secretary Zinke to remind his colleagues in the Administration of the many contributions in blood and treasure that Indian Country has already made to the welfare of the United States. The Shakopee Tribe's financial success in the gaming market is an exception to the experience of most tribal governments, and so we will ask Secretary Zinke to help preserve the federal funding that is owed all Indian tribes under the trust responsibility._

And finally, we will ask Secretary Zinke to take the lead within the Trump Administration to secure early enactment of the Tribal Labor Sovereignty Act of 2017, Senator Moran's bill -- S. 63. That bill would restore seven decades of legal precedent by treating tribal government employers the same as all other sovereign governmental employers. This bill is not about labor unions, it is about tribal sovereignty, about our tribal right to set our own laws for our own employees on our own lands.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to outline some new directions we believe are worthy of support from Secretary Zinke and President Trump. I would be most pleased to answer any questions you may have.