



# USET

SOVEREIGNTY PROTECTION FUND

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*Transmitted via email*

April 27, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Re: Publication of Amendments to CT Tribal Nation Gaming Compacts

Dear Secretary Zinke,

On behalf of United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF), we write to urge you to, in accordance with federal law, immediately publish in the Federal Register a deemed approved notice of the amendments to the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation's and Mohegan Tribe's Gaming Compacts. Your continued inaction jeopardizes the economic development of the two Tribal Nations, while ignoring both your duties under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA), as well as the federal trust obligation.

USET SPF is an intertribal organization comprised of twenty-seven federally recognized Tribal Nations, ranging from Maine to Florida to Texas<sup>1</sup>. USET SPF is dedicated to enhancing the development of federally recognized Tribal Nations, to improving the capabilities of Tribal governments, and assisting USET SPF Member Tribal Nations in dealing effectively with public policy issues and in serving the broad needs of Indian people.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs' website describes the federal trust responsibility in part as, "a duty to carry out the mandates of federal law with respect to American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages." The Secretary's publication of gaming compacts is required under IGRA and its implementing regulations. The circumstances under which the Secretary may disapprove a compact are extremely limited: only in cases where a compact violates federal law or the trust obligations of the United States. Following a period of 45 days, compacts are considered to be deemed approved, regardless of whether the Secretary takes action. For the compact amendments in question, the 45 day period expired on September 15, 2017. The time for publication of the deemed approved notice is long overdue.

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<sup>1</sup> USET SPF member Tribal Nations include: Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas (TX), Aroostook Band of Micmac Indians (ME), Catawba Indian Nation (SC), Cayuga Nation (NY), Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (NC), Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians (ME), Jena Band of Choctaw Indians (LA), Mashantucket Pequot Indian Tribe (CT), Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe (MA), Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida (FL), Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MS), Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut (CT), Narragansett Indian Tribe (RI), Oneida Indian Nation (NY), Pamunkey Indian Tribe (VA), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township (ME), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point (ME), Penobscot Indian Nation (ME), Poarch Band of Creek Indians (AL), Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (NY), Seminole Tribe of Florida (FL), Seneca Nation of Indians (NY), Shinnecock Indian Nation (NY), Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana (LA), and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) (MA).

Again, USET SPF strongly urges you to uphold your trust and legal obligations to the Mohegan and Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nations by fulfilling your responsibilities under IGRA. As you said during a signing ceremony for the Shawnee Tribe's trust land acquisition, "one of my top priorities for the Department of the Interior is to make tribal sovereignty meaningful, and that includes providing the basis for tribes to build and strengthen their economies." We call upon you to ensure your actions as Secretary and the actions of the Department reflect these words. Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact Ms. Liz Malerba, USET SPF Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs, at [LMalerba@usetinc.org](mailto:LMalerba@usetinc.org) or 202-624-3550.

Sincerely,



Kirk Francis  
President



Kitcki A. Carroll  
Executive Director