



UNITED SOUTH AND EASTERN TRIBES, INC.

USET Resolution No. 2002:056

ADVERTISED POSITION OF U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY

- WHEREAS,** United South and Eastern Tribes Incorporated (USET) is an intertribal organization comprised of twenty-four (24) federally recognized tribes; and
- WHEREAS,** the actions taken by the USET Board of Directors officially represent the intentions of each member tribe, as the Board of Directors comprises delegates from the member tribes' leadership; and
- WHEREAS,** the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has advertised the position of Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Native American Programs as a General Schedule 15 (GS-15); and
- WHEREAS,** the position has been a Senior Executive Service position since its inception until December 2001; and
- WHEREAS,** the USET Board of Directors believes that Indian Housing is a truly unique program within HUD; and
- WHEREAS,** a letter (attached) has been prepared to send to Honorable Secretary Mel Martinez addressing this issue; therefore, be it
- RESOLVED** that the USET Board of Directors endorse and give their permission to use the USET name as a cosigner; and, be it further
- RESOLVED** that the USET Board of Directors demands that this position be filled by a qualified American Indian.

CERTIFICATION

This resolution was duly passed at the USET Impact Week Meeting, at which a quorum was presented in Washington, D.C., Thursday, January 31, 2002.

Keller George, President
United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

Beverly M. Wright, Secretary
United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

January 14, 2002



The Honorable Mel Martinez
Secretary
Department of HUD
451 Seventh Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20410

Dear Secretary Martinez:

The National Congress of American Indians, together with the Coalition for Indian Housing and Development, the National American Indian Housing Council and other undersigned Native organizations, would like to draw your attention to an internal HUD matter that greatly concerns us. The Native American housing community hopes you will give it your immediate attention.

At the time the HUD Office of Native American Programs was created, a Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) was given responsibility for all HUD Indian housing programs. Secretary Cisneros found the position warranted a Senior Executive Service ranking, even though it was originally slated as a GS-15 position. The DAS for ONAP remained an SES position until it was vacated last summer.

For the past several years, due to efforts of implementing the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996, a feeling has spread amongst the nation's Tribal Leaders that the DAS position should actually be raised to Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at HUD. The reasoning behind such a change is partly because of the unique nature of Indian housing as opposed to public housing, being governed by separate legislation, but also because the position requires increasing levels of responsibility and knowledge in dealing with Native American culture as well as the requirements of treaties and laws which govern Indian Country. The principles of tribal sovereignty and the government-to-government relationship between tribes and the federal government place Indian housing in its own category, needing its own authority in direct contact with you, the Secretary.

Many important issues currently need attention within ONAP. Instituting a Consultation Policy that is acceptable to both HUD and the tribes, implementing NAHASDA amendments, and addressing issues raised in the August 2001 HUD Inspector General audit are only a few. It is therefore frustrating that the DAS position has remained vacant for nearly nine months. It is even more frustrating to learn that the new DAS is eligible only as a GS-15 career position, with a requirement of only one year of experience.

It is vital that the DAS of ONAP be competent, determined, and experienced. To find a candidate who will be able to fulfill the requirements of the job he or she must be properly

compensated and have the authority to do what is needed. Already in Indian Country we know of qualified candidates who would have applied but are no longer interested because of what amounts to a downgrade of the position.

We realize that the selection process for a new DAS is well underway, with applications due January 17. We ask first that you take into strong account our collective recommendation on who should fill the position, but we also request your support for permanently establishing the DAS at the Senior Executive Service level while exploring the option of elevating the position to Assistant Secretary.

I would welcome the opportunity of discussing this with you further. You may contact me in North Dakota at the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation, at (701) 627-4781.

Sincerely,

Tex Hall
President
National Congress of American Indians

Co-Signed by:

Coalition for Indian Housing and Development
National American Indian Housing Council

Cc:

The Honorable Paul S. Sarbanes, Chairman, Senate Banking Committee
The Honorable Barbara Mikulski, Chairwoman, Senate VA HUD Appropriations
The Honorable Michael Oxley, Chairman, House Financial Services Committee
The Honorable James T. Walsh, Chairman, House VA-HUD Appropriations
The Honorable Michael Liu, Assistant Secretary, Public and Indian Housing
Mr. Ted Key, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Native American Programs

Regional Associations:

Association of Alaska Housing Authorities
Northwest Indian Housing Authorities Association
Southern Plains Indian Housing Association
Nevada-California Indian Housing Authorities Association
United South and Eastern Tribes
Eastern Area Indian Housing Authorities Association
Southwest Indian Housing Authorities Association
Great Lakes Housing Association
United Native American Housing Association