



June 10, 2014

The Honorable Jon Tester
Chairman
Indian Affairs Committee
U.S. Senate
838 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso
Ranking Member
Indian Affairs Committee
U.S. Senate
838 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Comments Regarding S. 2188

Dear Chairman Tester and Ranking Member Barrasso:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), I am writing to share our concerns regarding S. 2188, a bill that would amend the Act of June 18, 1934 to reaffirm the authority of the Secretary of the Interior to take land into trust for Indian tribes. It is my understanding that your Committee will be considering S. 2188 this week. RCRC is an association of thirty-four rural California counties and the RCRC Board of Directors is composed of elected Supervisors from those member counties.

There are over 100 tribes in the State of California. RCRC believes that under the current system, local governments do not have an adequate voice during the federal fee-to-trust (FTT) application process, and that the local land use impacts of these decisions are not being considered. These decisions have significant impacts on the health, safety, and infrastructure of local governments, and can often interrupt or irreparably damage long-term general planning.

The impact is even more pronounced in rural counties. For example, RCRC member Inyo County, located in central California is mostly public land; with less than two percent of property within the county being privately owned. Losing potentially revenue-generating property to FTT applications with little or no warning and no purposeful way to describe the impact on the community is extremely harmful.

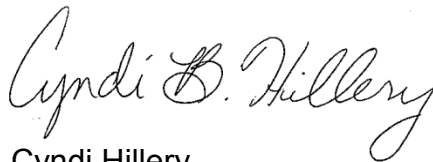
We would encourage Congress to alter the current FTT decision-making process in a practical and balanced way that acknowledges the impact of land use decisions on affected local governments, as well as the important need for decisions that support established tribal rights. RCRC supports a FTT process where local governments are engaged at the earliest possible point within the process, thus ensuring enough time to

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work with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and tribes to make sure ramifications to the community are adequately defined, and appropriate mitigation for the county is considered.

RCRC strongly believes that the current FTT process must be revised to protect the public interest, and hopes the Committee will keep this in mind as it marks up S. 2188. Thank you for your attention to this important matter. If you have questions regarding RCRC's perspective on this issue, please feel free to contact me at (916) 447-4806 or chillery@rcrcnet.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cyndi B. Hillery". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Cyndi Hillery
Legislative Advocate

cc: Senator Dianne Feinstein
Senator Barbara Boxer