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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lawmakers Urge Indian Appeals Board to Overturn Schaghticoke Decision

Say Leadership Vacuum Has Led to "Unlawful and Erroneous Decision"

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Three Connecticut lawmakers today wrote to the Interior Board of Indian Appeals and urged it to overturn the "unlawful and erroneous" recognition of the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation.

In a letter to Chief Administrative Judge Steven K. Linscheid, U.S. Reps. Nancy Johnson, Christopher Shays and Rob Simmons said an impartial review of the record will reveal sufficient grounds to overturn the January 2004 decision by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Citing the interest constituents have in the case, the lawmakers also requested an anticipated schedule for action on the pending appeal.

The letter follows.

February 10, 2005

The Hon. Steven K. Linscheid
Chief Administrative Judge
Office of Hearings and Appeals
Interior Board of Indian Appeals
801 North Quincy Street, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22203

Re: In Re Federal Acknowledgment of the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation

Dear Judge Linscheid:

We are writing to inquire on the status of the Request for Reconsideration of the federal acknowledgment of the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation (STN), the administrative appeal presently pending before the Interior Board of Indian Appeals (IBIA).

Because of the tremendous interest our constituents have in the appeal proceedings, we would appreciate a detailed account of the actions IBIA has taken to date and its expected future schedule, including when you anticipate rendering a decision.

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We are hopeful that the IBIA will adjudicate this matter according to federal regulations, based on a thorough and impartial review of the evidence in the record. We believe this review will reveal ample grounds for reconsideration under the regulations. These grounds include material errors in analyzing STN marriage rates and the January 12, 2004, internal "briefing paper" in which Bureau of Indian Affairs staff outlined an explicit strategy to disregard both regulations and precedent in recognizing the STN. This unlawful action was subsequently approved by the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs.

We believe a leadership vacuum at the Bureau of Indian Affairs has contributed to the unlawful and erroneous decision to recognize the STN. Our constituents are relying on the IBIA, after an objective and thorough review of the evidence in the record, to correct this breach of the public trust and provide necessary leadership on this important matter.

Sincerely,

/s/

Nancy L. Johnson
Member of Congress

/s/

Christopher Shays
Member of Congress

/s/

Rob Simmons
Member of Congress

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