

May 24, 2010

Amendment to Tax Extenders Bill
Aims to Improve *Cobell* Indian Settlement Agreement
Reflects five improvements sought by Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians
(AK, CA, ID, MT, OR and WA)

Dear Colleague:

Today I filed an amendment with the Rules Committee to H.R. 4213, the tax extenders legislation, to improve section 607, which authorizes the proposed Cobell v. Salazar Class Action Settlement Agreement. My amendment reflects five key areas in need of improvement that were identified in a resolution adopted by the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians. This organization represents more than 50 federally recognized tribes in Oregon, Idaho, Washington, southeast Alaska, northern California, and western Montana.

The principle improvement made by my amendment is to put a cap on attorney fees – which, unless Congress acts, could exceed \$100 million. By capping attorney fees at \$50 million, as my amendment would do, this allows the \$50 million saved to increase payments to individual Indians. Currently, every dollar paid to attorneys is a dollar taken out of the pockets of individual Indian claimants.

Other improvements made by my Amendment are described more fully below.

I would appreciate your support for increasing benefits for individual Indians without increasing the overall cost of the settlement proposal.

Sincerely,

/s

Doc Hastings
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources