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January 29, 2004

The Honorable Gale Norton
Secretary of the Interior
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Norton:

I am forwarding to you resolutions passed by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and the governing bodies of the cities of Sebastopol, Santa Rosa, Petaluma, Windsor and Sonoma opposing the plans by the Federated Miwok Tribe of Graton to construct a casino/resort complex on unincorporated agricultural land near Rohnert Park in Sonoma County, California.

The county and the five cities are in agreement that the giant gaming and resort complex planned by the tribe with backing from Las Vegas casino operators poses serious breaches of the county's General Plan and a voter-approved community separator ordinance. Additionally these local governments are concerned that the proposed casino complex will have negative impacts on groundwater supplies, a congested transportation corridor, and wetland habitat for several endangered species. And buffeted by the state's fiscal crisis, these entities are alarmed by the prospect of being burdened with unreimbursed costs for casino-related fire, emergency and public safety services.

The resolutions passed by these six Sonoma County local governments all support my bill, H.R.2656, and companion legislation in the Senate by Senator Diane Feinstein, S1342. These bills would give the Secretary of the Interior discretion to decide whether to take the proposed casino site into trust for the tribe and would subject the tribe's plan to build a casino on trust land to a two part review that would include weighing the impacts of the casino on the surrounding community.

These resolutions, along with a 2000 signature petition and hundreds of letters I have received, demonstrate the level of opposition to the proposed Miwok casino in Sonoma County. While we respect the rights of Native Americans and support tribal sovereignty, we oppose a policy that allows tribes to build gaming facilities and related resort properties without regard to local general plans or any meaningful environmental review or protections.

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Madam Secretary, while there is tremendous opposition to the currently proposed Miwok casino near Rohnert Park (including my own), I realize that is would be extremely difficult to overturn laws and state and federal Indian gaming policies that support the tribe's plan. However, it is in your power to set a corrective course. I repeat the request that I made in my letter of May 23, 2003 (attached) for you to require an enforceable agreement with **all** local governments impacted by the construction and operation of a gaming facility.

I join the governing bodies of the County of Sonoma and the cities of Sebastopol, Santa Rosa, Petaluma, Windsor and Sonoma in eagerly awaiting your response to this letter.

Sincerely yours,

Lynn Woolsey

Lynn Woolsey
Member of Congress