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Glendale City Council
April 7, 2009
Congressman Trent Franks
Statement for the Record
Tohono O'odham Nation Casino Proposal

There are three reasons that the casino proposal merits serious scrutiny by the residents of Glendale, the citizens of Arizona, and by the federal government.

First, if history is any kind of teacher, it is very possible that such a casino will hurt more tribal members than it actually helps. Instead of gambling establishments increasing tribal independence and encouraging upward economic mobility, most often we have seen the opposite take place.

Aside from the few hundred people who manage the largest casinos and thereby realize significant profits, most Native Americans do not benefit economically from casino-related jobs. One 1997 report showed that unemployment among Indians in Minnesota remained above 50 percent, the same level it had been before the arrival of almost 20 casinos in that state. In other states, unemployment was shown to actually increase after the opening of new casinos. There is also a well-documented increase in the rate of gambling addictions among Native Americans compared to the rest of the overall population.

Second, the arrival or expansion of gambling casinos inevitably brings destructive social repercussions. Numerous reports have shown a marked increase in gambling addictions, suicides, child abuse and neglect, overall crime rates, and domestic violence. For instance, several counties have shown as much as a 35 percent increase in bankruptcies after the arrival of one or more new gambling facilities.

Many other studies have shown a marked increase in the number of adults who demonstrate serious or pathological gambling problems after casinos begin to operate in new areas. The National Gambling Impact Study has reported that compulsive gambling forces a greatly heightened level of stress and tension into marriages and families, often culminating in divorce and other forms of familial conflict. Numerous other studies show a marked increase in the number of children and spouses of compulsive gamblers who are abused.

Third, there should also be careful evaluation of the long-term economic impact such a massive casino would have on local infrastructure. Local Glendale leaders have already voiced serious

concern over whether current public utilities-- water, gas, sewage-- have the capacity to accommodate the demand that would occur. Tribes face less regulation and pay no state or federal taxes. Under the Tohono O'odham proposal, some of the casino revenue would be shared, but the funds could be dispersed to the communities the Tribe chooses, and it remains dubious as to whether this would cover the significant infrastructure costs local taxpaying residents would incur.

Over the course of the last several weeks, Glendale residents have spoken to me of these and other concerns they have with the casino proposal. For this reason, over the course of the next few weeks I intend to send a letter to the Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar, asking him to examine all of the potential ramifications of reclassifying the Glendale tribal land as federal land-in-trust for the purpose of building a casino.

Citizens and tribal members alike have a solemn duty to consider whether casinos are the type of revenue-building model that is good for the community. If even a few of the concerns that I have cited are valid with respect to this casino proposal, then as members of local, state, and federal government, we owe it to our constituents to find innovative, alternate means of creating jobs and economic growth that would truly benefit both local residents and members of the Tohono O'odham Tribe.

The stated goal of building a new casino in the West Valley is economic gain for local residents, or broadening the socio-economic opportunities for Native American tribes. The truth is that neither of these outcomes is likely to result, and the attending negative impact of a large gambling casino on the children and families of Glendale and the surrounding community should be the prime consideration going forward.

Therefore, I strongly urge Glendale City Council members to adopt Resolution No. 4246, opposing the Tohono O'odham Nation's plan and current application for the Federal Government to take approximately 134 acres at the southwest corner of 91st and Northern Avenues into trust and create an Indian reservation at the proposed site in the Glendale Municipal Planning Area.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Trent Franks". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Trent Franks
United States Congress