



Tohono O'odham Nation Office of the Chairman & Vice Chairwoman

COMPASSION FAITH TRADITION RESPECT
T-I:BDAG 'AMJED S-WOHOCUDA HIMDAG PI:K 'ELID

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Chairman

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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SEN. MCCAIN SUPPORTS TAXPAYERS PAYING \$1 BILLION TO BENEFIT SPECIAL INTERESTS *S. 152 Will Eliminate Thousands of Jobs*

SELLS, Ariz. – In the first contested party-line vote in recent memory, Senate Indian Affairs Committee Republicans voted today for a special interest earmark, S. 152, which the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office warns could cost taxpayers more than \$1 billion. Sponsored by Sen. John McCain, S. 152 creates a no-competition zone in the Phoenix metro area in order to protect the gaming market share of two wealthy, politically-connected East Valley tribes.

At the hearing, Committee Vice Chairman Jon Tester, the Senate's top Democrat on Indian Affairs issues, stated strong opposition to S. 152. Senator Tester voiced serious concern on the bill's potential \$1 billion cost to taxpayers and the fact that it unilaterally amends the Nation's nearly thirty-year-old land claim settlement. Senator Tester further warned that the bill sets a dangerous precedent for tribes across the country that are negotiating land and water rights settlements.

The bill—a mere 40 lines long—applies only to the Tohono O'odham Nation's West Valley Reservation. S. 152 and its identical companion bill, H.R. 308, seek to circumvent the 16-straight court and federal agency rulings that have reaffirmed the Nation's right to move forward with its project. If passed, S. 152 would halt construction of the Nation's West Valley Resort and Casino project, immediately putting 1,300 construction workers on the unemployment line and preventing the creation of 3,000 permanent jobs.

Despite repeated court rulings favoring the Nation, opponents of the West Valley Resort continue to spend record dollars on lobbying efforts. The Gila River Indian Community spent nearly \$1 million in the first quarter of 2015 for one lobbying firm. Combined, opponents have spent almost \$19 million in campaign and lobbying expenditures over the past few years just to halt the Nation's project. Unfortunately, working Arizona families and the American taxpayer are being asked to pay the price for special interest profits.

Tohono O'odham Nation Chairman Ned Norris, Jr. said, *"We wholeheartedly agree with Senator Tester and commend him for his leadership. This legislation harkens back to an era of broken treaties and false promises. After the Nation has consistently followed the law, it is shameful for the Senate to consider breaking the federal government's word, and placing taxpayers on the hook for this special interest earmark. If this legislation passes, all tribes should question whether Congress can be trusted to keep its word in land and water rights settlements."*

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The Tohono O'odham Nation is a federally-recognized Indian tribe with reservation lands in Maricopa County, Pinal County, and Pima County, Arizona. The West Valley Resort is located on the Nation's reservation land at 95th and Northern avenues. It will generate thousands of new jobs and more than \$300 million in annual economic impact. For more information, visit www.westvalleyresort.com.