

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

June 29, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary  
United States Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington D.C. 20240

Secretary Zinke,

Several tribal nations within the State of Washington have contacted our offices to express their concern about the Department of the Interior's failure to engage in government-to-government consultation regarding its proposed revisions to the fee-to-trust regulations (25 C.F.R. 151). The Secretary of the Interior's authority to take land into trust pursuant to the Indian Reorganization Act has restored millions of acres of tribal homelands since 1934. However, that progress has slowed dramatically and over the past year and a half, the Bureau of Indian Affairs has taken 16,000 acres of land into trust compared to an average of 58,860 acres per year that were taken into trust between 2009 and 2016.

Our tribal constituents fear that the Department's proposal will make it increasingly difficult for tribes to restore their homelands and place land into trust status. Further, they are perplexed by the effort because they did not ask the Department to undertake such a review. Based on the tribal consultations the Department has conducted so far, the message from tribal leaders has been clear: the proposal lacks clarity and runs the risk of increasing the regulatory burden for many tribes. Without the full support of tribal nations, it is likely that this effort will create negative unintended consequences for Indian Country.

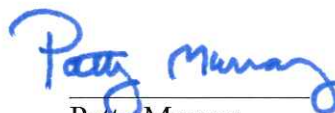
The federal government's tribal policies are best informed and executed when they are organized to solve problems that tribal nations identify themselves. That is the very core of self-governance and self-determination. The federal government's tribal policies are at their worst when they seek to impose new restraints on tribal nations, diminish tribal sovereignty, and fix problems that do not exist.

We urge you to listen to the voices of the tribal nations that you serve and abandon your review of the fee-to-trust regulations.

Sincerely,



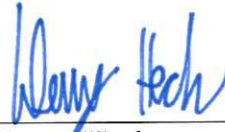
Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



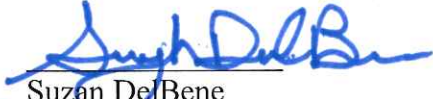
Patty Murray  
United States Senator



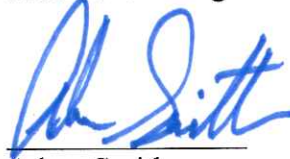
Derek Kilmer  
Member of Congress



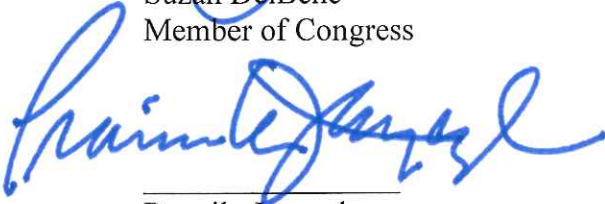
Denny Heck  
Member of Congress



Suzan DelBene  
Member of Congress



Adam Smith  
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress