

STATEMENT OF MR. MONTIE DEER

Before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs

September 16, 1998

MR. CHAIRMAN, I WANT TO THANK YOU AND THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE FOR CONDUCTING THIS HEARING ON MY NOMINATION AS CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL INDIAN GAMING COMMISSION.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LET ME FIRST THANK THE COMMITTEE FOR ALL OF ITS PAST SUPPORT FOR THE NIGC. AS A PERSON WHO HAS SPENT MOST OF HIS LIFE IN LAW ENFORCEMENT, I KNOW HOW CRITICAL IT IS TO HAVE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES PROVIDE THE NECESSARY OVERSIGHT OF THESE ACTIVITIES.

FOR THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS, I HAVE BEEN AN ASSISTANT U.S. ATTORNEY FOR THE DISTRICT OF KANSAS. IN THIS POSITION, I WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR A NUMBER OF CASES INVOLVING INDIAN NATIONS. I HANDLED ALL OF THESE CASES ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND WITH THE RESPECT OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE INDIAN NATIONS. IT IS WITH THIS SAME SENSE OF DUTY AND RESPECT THAT I WILL APPROACH THIS POSITION IF I AM CONFIRMED.

MR. CHAIRMAN, THE INDIAN REGULATORY ACT OF 1988 SET ABOUT A REGULATORY SCHEME THAT ALLOWED INDIAN NATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES TO OPERATE GAMING ON INDIAN LANDS. OVER THE YEARS, THE ACT HAS BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR LIFTING MANY INDIAN TRIBES OUT OF COMPLETE POVERTY AND DESPAIR AND HAS BREATHED NEW HOPE AND OPTIMISM ON MANY RESERVATIONS ACROSS AMERICA.

BUT AS YOU KNOW, NOT EVERY INDIAN NATION IN THIS COUNTRY ENGAGES IN GAMING, AND NOT EVERY NATION THAT ENGAGES IN GAMING IS MAKING A LOT OF MONEY. GAMING OPERATIONS ON INDIAN RESERVATIONS ARE AS UNIQUE AND DIVERSE AS THE NATIONS THEMSELVES.

BUT IF GAMING IS TO CONTINUE TO BE A VALUABLE TOOL IN THE ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY FOR INDIAN TRIBES, IT MUST BE PROPERLY AND THOROUGHLY REGULATED BY THE APPROPRIATE TRIBAL, STATE AND FEDERAL AUTHORITIES.

IF I AM CONFIRMED FOR THIS POSITION, YOU CAN BE ASSURED THAT I WILL WORK WITH THESE REGULATORY OFFICIALS TO ENSURE THAT ALL INDIAN GAMING IS DONE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE INDIAN GAMING REGULATORY ACT AND THE APPROVED STATE TRIBAL COMPACTS.

MR. CHAIRMAN, IN THE LAST TEN YEARS INDIAN GAMING HAS EXPANDED BEYOND MOST PEOPLE'S EXPECTATIONS. TODAY INDIAN GAMING CONSISTS OF 185 TRIBES WHO OPERATE 285 GAMING FACILITIES IN 28 STATES. THE INDUSTRY GENERATES OVER \$7 BILLION A YEAR IN GROSS REVENUES.

THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE NIGC MUST HAVE MORE RESOURCES TO EFFECTIVELY REGULATE AND ENFORCE THE PROVISIONS OF IGRA. THAT IS WHY YOUR ACTION LAST YEAR TO ALLOW THE NIGC TO INCREASE ITS FEES AND EXPAND ITS OPERATION WAS SO VALUABLE.

YOU WILL BE PLEASED TO KNOW THAT THE NIGC WILL OPEN ITS FIRST FIELD OFFICE IN ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA IN LESS THAN SIX WEEKS. THIS OFFICE WILL BE THE FIRST TO ALLOW GREATER ENFORCEMENT AND COMPLIANCE ON THE PART OF THE NIGC.

AGAIN, I WANT TO THANK THE COMMITTEE FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY AND I WILL ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.