

Kevin K. Washburn
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs
U.S. Department of the Interior

Kevin K. Washburn, an enrolled member of the Chickasaw Nation in Oklahoma, was confirmed by the United States Senate as the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs for the U.S. Department of the Interior on September 21, 2012, and was sworn into office by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar on October 9, 2012.

Mr. Washburn is the 12th Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs to be confirmed since the position was established by Congress in the late 1970s. In addition to carrying out the Department’s trust responsibilities regarding the management of tribal and individual Indian trust lands and assets, the Assistant Secretary is responsible for promoting the self-determination and economic self-sufficiency of the nation’s 566 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and their approximately two million enrolled members.

Mr. Washburn came to the Department of the Interior from the University of New Mexico School of Law where he served as Dean, a post he held since June 2009. Prior to that, he served as the Rosentiel Distinguished Professor of Law at the University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law from 2008 to 2009, and as an Associate Professor of Law at the University of Minnesota Law School from 2002 to 2008. From 2007 to 2008, Mr. Washburn was the Oneida Indian Nation Visiting Professor at Harvard Law School.

Previously, he served as General Counsel for the National Indian Gaming Commission from 2000 to 2002, and as an Assistant United States Attorney in Albuquerque, N.M., from 1997 to 2000. He was a trial attorney in the Indian Resource Section of the U.S. Department of Justice from 1994 to 1997. From 1993 to 1994, he clerked for the Hon. William C. Canby, Jr., of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in Phoenix. His past awards in federal service include the Environmental Protection Agency’s Bronze Medal for Commendable Service (2000) for representing the agency in successful Clean Air Act litigation and Special Commendations for Outstanding Service from the Justice Department (1997, 1998).

Mr. Washburn is a well-known scholar of federal Indian law. Among his other books and articles, he is a co-author and editor of the leading legal treatise in the field of Indian law, Cohen’s Handbook of Federal Indian Law (2012 edition).

Mr. Washburn was raised in Oklahoma and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics with Honors from the University of Oklahoma (1989). He also received a Juris Doctorate from Yale Law School (1993), where he was the editor-in-chief of the Yale Journal on Regulation. He has been a member of the American Law Institute since 2007, and is a member of the State Bars of Minnesota and New Mexico.

Mr. Washburn is married with two children.