

OPENING STATEMENT

Good morning and thank you to our witnesses for travelling here to testify at this hearing, especially Governor Lewis from the Gila River Indian Community in Arizona. Welcome.

Today we will be examining two pieces of legislation.

H.R. 3160, the *Blackwater Trading Post Land Transfer Act*, authorizes the United States to place 55 acres of historically and culturally significant land located in Pinal County, Arizona into trust on behalf of the Gila River Indian Community.

The land on which the Trading Post sits is surrounded on three sides by the Community's reservation, with the frontage road of SR-287 bordering the fourth side.

The Blackwater Trading Post most likely began operations selling and buying goods with the Community shortly after the highway was built in 1926.

The Trading Post was purchased by the Gila River Indian Community in 2010.

Among the contents of the building – which included a grocery, a tack shop, a deli, and a store – is a museum collection of over 1,000 cultural items, including 126 Akimel O’odham (***ACK-uh-mole AH-tum***) baskets.

Due to the Community’s purchase of the land, these artifacts are now safely held within the Community’s Heritage Center.

Though the Community is unsure whether it will re-open the Blackwater Trading Post, they are eager to take the land into trust to ensure that it is preserved as an important piece of Community history.

Our other bill, S. 46, the *Klamath (CLA-muth) Tribe Judgment Fund Repeal Act*, provides greater flexibility for the Klamath Tribes of Oregon to access and use judgment fund monies they were awarded following successful litigation against the United States.

Like many other tribes, the Klamath Tribes were terminated by Congress in the 1950s during the shameful termination era.

As a result, their lands and other tribal property was monetized and distributed to individual members of the Tribes.

The Termination Act also required that the Tribes submit to the Secretary of the Interior a final roll of tribal members.

The Tribes complied, submitted a list consisting of 2,133 individuals, referred to as the “1954 roll.”

At the time of their termination, the Klamath Tribes also had pending lawsuits before the Indian Claims Commission (ICC) seeking compensation for the mismanagement of tribal assets.

After the Court made its judgment in the Tribes' favor, Congress passed the *Klamath Tribe Judgment Fund Act* in 1965 to enact the decision, directing the Secretary of the Interior to make per-capita distributions to all living individuals listed on the 1954 roll, or to their heirs.

However, limiting compensation to individuals listed on this outdated roll has had unintended and adverse consequences.

In 1986, the Klamath Tribes' Federal trust relationship with the United States was restored, which reinitiated the enrollment of tribal members.

Despite this, the language that exists in the Judgment Fund Act still prevents any distribution of funds for the benefit of the Tribes or any members enrolled after 1954.

The Klamath Tribe Judgment Fund Act essentially robs the tribe of the ability to determine how best to allocate the compensation they are owed.

S. 46 repeals the Klamath (*CLA-muth*) Tribe Judgment Fund Act and supports the Tribes' ability to exercise its sovereign authority and discretion over tribal funds.

I look forward to hearing all of the testimony on these bills, and I would now like to recognize the Ranking Member for any opening remarks.