

DOI SELF-GOVERNANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

c/o Self-Governance Communication and Education

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January 16, 2018

Mr. James E. Cason
Associate Deputy Secretary
Office of the Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW, Room 6653
Washington, DC 20240

RE: Cobell Settlement Land Buy-Back Program for Tribal Nations

Dear Associate Deputy Secretary Cason:

I write on behalf of the Department of the Interior's Self-Governance Advisory Committee (SGAC), in response to your *Dear Tribal Leader Letter* dated July 28, 2017 regarding changes in the implementation of the Land Buy-Back Program for Tribal Nations. SGAC finds your decision to change the Land Buy-Back Program at such a late date deeply disappointing. The original approved group of Tribal participants has been waiting years, some approaching a decade, to participate in the Land Buy-Back Program. However, it appears that many of these Tribes have been permanently excluded from the program as they were removed from the latest list of implementation sites without consultation. True government-to-government consultation requires more than a Federal Register notice and a single listening session.

Since the Cobell settlement created the \$1.9 billion land consolidation fund to purchase fractionated interests from willing sellers to benefit Tribal communities and aid in land consolidation, many Tribes repeatedly expressed interest in the program through letters of interest. While waiting for this program to reach them, Tribes have spent their resources to purchase fractionated interests with the assurance that they would gain access to the Land Buy-Back Program in later years. With the reduction in implementation sites, that is sadly no longer the case for over half of the original participating Tribes.

There is still an opportunity to realign this program to the original intent of the Cobell settlement. I urge you, as Chair of the Land Buy-Back Oversight Board, to carry out meaningful consultation with Tribes that have expressed interest, and return the Land Buy-Back Program to its original intent and previous implementation schedule.

Sincerely,



W. Ron Allen, Tribal Chairman/CEO, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, and
Chairman of the Self-Governance Advisory Committee

cc: Sharee Freeman, Director, Office of Self-Governance, DOI
John Tahsuda, Acting Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs, DOI
Bryan Rice, Director, Bureau Indian Affairs, DOI
SGAC Members and Technical Workgroup