

Fort Sill Apache Tribe  
Jeff Haozous, Chairman  
Testimony of 2/28/15

Chairman and members of the Indian Gaming Compact committee,

I am Jeff Haozous, Chairman of the Fort Sill Apache Tribe. My mission, is to restore our people to their rightful lands, restore our people to our rightful home, to our rightful place in the world, which is in our homeland in Southern New Mexico and Arizona.

I am committed to fulfilling the goals of the tribe and will continue to assert our rights in New Mexico until we are successful.

We are here today to discuss the 2015 compact. To be clear this compact is clearly discriminatory toward the Fort Sill Apache Tribe. It contains language that prevents us from signing it. It has language in the Introduction and in Section 18 that only hurts Fort Sill Apaches and does nothing to further the goals of the compact or partnership amongst other tribes, pueblos and the State. We request the exclusionary language restricting after-acquired lands to be removed from this Compact or to vote "No" on this compact.

One hundred and sixty three years ago in 1852, my great-great-grandfather, Chiricahua Apache Chief Mangus Coloradas was in Santa Fe. He worked to reach an agreement to cooperate with the United States in the Territory of New Mexico, to collaborate, to work together, to protect one another's interests, to outline the territory of the Apache, the Chiricahua and Warm Springs Apache territory versus the New Mexico territory. Not much different from what we are trying to do here today.

Our people were not and have not been protected. They were removed as prisoners of war after Geronimo surrendered 1886. They were removed from New Mexico in from the Warm Springs Apache Reservation, located 30 miles Northwest of Truth or Consequences. My grandfather Sam Haozous was taken and then imprisoned.

Ultimately our ancestors remained as prisoners of War from 1886-1914 in Florida, Alabama, and finally twenty years in Oklahoma on Fort Sill.

In the 1970's before the federal Indian Claims Commission, the commission that heard claims by Indian Tribes against the U.S Government, ruled that over 14 million acres from South of Truth or Consequences and west of the Rio Grande River into Arizona is the aboriginal and Indian Title land of the Fort Sill Apache Tribe. That is where the Chiricahua and Warm Springs Apache Tribe lived and prospered. That is the location of our homeland.

In 2012, we received our first reservation since our people were imprisoned. This is our reservation. Being given a reservation represents a victory in a long fought struggle that has been in contention for over 140 years. In 2013 the New Mexico Supreme Court ruled that the Fort Sill Apache is a New Mexico Tribe.

We are here today much like our ancestors were many years ago to discuss a state-tribal agreement to benefit both the State of New Mexico and the Tribes. The tribes and pueblos of New Mexico partner with the State to provide much needed revenues and jobs and to comply with the intent of Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) as a means of promoting economic development, self-sufficiency and strong tribal government. The purpose is to ensure that our people have the ability to thrive and survive.

Now, that our Tribe is closer than ever to receiving approval to open a gaming facility at Akela we need to work with the State for the betterment of both entities. Because of this, we are encountering very strong resistance, but we will continue to fight for our culture and our survival. This compact has been drafted not to aid in partnerships, but to split people and force them to bring disharmony towards one another.

We have reached out to the State and to the Tribes and Pueblos for cooperation and will continue to do so. We will and must pursue whatever legal means necessary to continue our return to our homelands. My mission is to return our people to our homelands. It's the right thing to do. It's the right thing for our people.

As we look around this Capitol building and outside of the building the sculptures of the famous New Mexico artist Alan Houser grace this place. Of particular significance is the sculpture that stands on the East side of this building. The sculpture entitled Three Friends, stands for the three cultures of our State. Alan was my uncle and a member of the Ft. Sill Apache Tribe, yet many say that we are not from this land. Alan was honored by Presidents, Governors, and to this day individuals recognize him as a resident of our State.

It's ultimately about the survival of our people as an independent tribe now with a place of our own we can conduct our own cultural activities, where we can live and do the Dance of the Mountain Spirits in the shadows of the mountains in which they were intended to be danced.

Our tribe is a great believer in education for our tribal members and as such We have a financial aid program that provides many tribal members with funds to help with higher education programs: not just undergrad but also with graduate and law school.

Be rest assured that we're here for fair treatment, respect, and to be accorded the rights that any New Mexico tribe should be accorded.

The determination as to whether our land can be used for gaming is a federal decision a decision that has been assured to us will happen soon. A decision that will not take 27 years. And when that decision happens, we will definitely take appropriate action.

It would be wonderful to sign a compact with the state. The Chiricahua, Warm Springs Apaches have never had a compact with the state. The last agreement that was made with New Mexico was made by my great grandfather Mangas Coloradus in 1852.

I think one hundred and sixty three years is long enough. I think it's time, and I would welcome the state to work with us and to collaborate because we can bring a lot of benefits to the state and it would to a long way toward healing our tribe.

In the words of Geronimo:

We are now held on Comanche and Kiowa lands, which are not suited to our needs-these lands and this climate are suited to the Indians who originally inhabited this country, of course, but our people are decreasing in numbers here, and will continue to decrease unless they are allowed to return to their native land. Such a result is inevitable.

There is no climate or soil which, to my mind, is equal to that of our lands. We could have plenty of good cultivating land, plenty of grass, plenty of timber and plenty of minerals in that land which the Almighty created for the Apaches. It is my land, my home, my fathers' land, to which I now ask to be allowed to return. I want to spend my last days there, and be buried among those mountains. If this could be I might die in peace, feeling that my people, placed in their native homes, would increase in numbers, rather than diminish as at present, and that our name would not become extinct.

I know that if my people were placed in that mountainous region lying around the head waters of the Gila River they would live in peace and act according to the will of the President. They would be prosperous and happy in tilling the soil and learning the civilization of the white men, whom they now respect. Could I but see this accomplished, I think I could forget all the wrongs that I have ever received, and die a contented and happy old man. But we can do nothing in this matter ourselves-we must wait until those in authority choose to act. If this cannot be done during my lifetime-if I must die in bondage- I hope that the remnant of the Apache tribe may, when I am gone, be granted the one privilege which they request-to return home.

I ask that this Committee take into account all of the history and the desire for the Ft. Sill Apache to take steps to return to their homeland. Steps that will be small at first but remember we were taken from our lands and there is a need to return. To accomplish this goal we need financial security and we

know we can accomplish this by beginning with a small casino at our reservation at Akela, New Mexico located in Luna County near Deming. The language in the 2015 Compact presented to you excludes us from accomplishing this goal. We are not against the compact we are against the 7<sup>th</sup> paragraph of the Introduction and Section 18 of the compact. Let me express that it is difficult for me to understand why this language is at the beginning and at the end of this document.