

Briefing on Indian Tribes and Climate Change Legislation

Wednesday, September 9, 2009

2:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Senate Indian Affairs Committee Room, SD-628

Sponsored by Senators Tom Udall (D-NM) and Max Baucus (D-MT)

All Senators, Senate Staff and interested parties are invited to attend a briefing about tribal provisions in climate change legislation.

Indian tribes are exceedingly vulnerable to, and disproportionately impacted by climate change. In North America, Indian tribes manage more than 95 million acres of natural-resource rich land and have thousands of years of experience adapting to changes in the landscape and climate. Remarkably, North American tribes have also experienced disproportionate environmental and economic impacts due to climate change. With valuable natural resources and knowledge, Indian tribes are poised to share experiences, and discuss and find collaborative solutions that will limit these impacts. Please join us for a briefing to learn how federal climate legislation can help Indian tribes deal with the impacts of climate change.

1) Introductory Remarks

- Senator Tom Udall

2) Brief Overview of the Presentations

- Bob Gruenig, National Tribal Environmental Council

3) Clean Energy and Energy Efficiency

- Keith Harper (Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma), Kilpatrick Stockton
- Alex Pearl (Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma), Kilpatrick Stockton
- Dean Suagee (Eastern Band of Cherokee), Hobbs, Straus, Dean & Walker, LLP

4) Alaska Issues (sea level rise, moving coastal villages)

- Mike Williams (Akiak Native Community, Alaska Intertribal Council)

5) Domestic and Natural Resource Adaptation in the Northwest and Southwest

- McCoy Oatman, Chairperson, Columbia Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
- John Antonio, Governor of Laguna Pueblo (New Mexico)

6) International – Indigenous Peoples Issues

- Armstrong Wiggins, Indian Law Resource Center

Presenter Bios:

Bob Gruenig is a senior policy analyst for the National Tribal Environmental Council (NTEC) in Albuquerque, New Mexico. In his position, Mr. Gruenig provides policy, legal and technical support to NTEC and its member tribes on a number of environmental and natural resource issues including those related to climate change.

Keith Harper is a member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. Mr. Harper is a partner in the Litigation department of Kilpatrick Stockton in Washington, DC and heads the Native American Affairs practice group. He has represented tribes and individual Indians before Federal Courts, the United States Congress, administrative agencies and international forums in matters involving enforcement of the trust responsibility, expansion and protection of tribal sovereignty, enforcement of tribal treaty rights, protection of land and natural resources, ensuring religious freedom for Native practitioners and development of international instruments guaranteeing the rights of indigenous people.

Alex Pearl is a member of the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma. Mr. Pearl serves in the Litigation Department of Kilpatrick Stockton's Washington, D.C. office and focuses his practice on Native American Affairs.

Dean Suagee is an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. Mr. Suagee serves as of Counsel at the law firm of Hobbs, Straus, Dean & Walker. He specializes in environmental and natural resources law and cultural heritage preservation.

Mike Williams is a member of the Akiak Native Community in Alaska. Mr. Williams is a Yupiaq Eskimo, from Akiak, Alaska located on the Kuskokwim River. He is the Vice-Chairman of the Akiak Native Community, a federally recognized tribe; and serves as Vice-Chairman of the Alaska Inter-Tribal Council (AITC), which represents 229 tribes in Alaska. Mr. Williams is also on the Executive Committee of the National Congress of American Indians.

McCoy Oatman is a member of the Nez Perce Tribe in Idaho. Mr. Oatman serves as Secretary for the Tribe's Executive Committee and Vice-Chairman for the Human Resource and Natural Resource Subcommittee. He is also the incoming chairperson for the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission whose mission is to ensure a unified voice in the overall management of fishery resources, and as managers, to protect reserved treaty rights through the exercise of the inherent sovereign powers of tribes.

John Antonio is the Governor of Pueblo of Laguna in New Mexico. Mr. Antonio has a degree in Forestry and previously served as the Tribal liaison to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Southwest Region.

Armstrong Wiggins is Director of the Washington, DC Office of the Indian Law Resource Center. He is a Miskito Indian from Nicaragua. He has testified on issues related to the rights of indigenous peoples at the Organization of American States and the United Nations.