



For immediate release  
May 21, 2008

Contact: Gilbert Gallegos  
(505) 476-2217

## **Governor Bill Richardson Applauds Federal Opposition to Illegal Casino**

SANTA FE – Governor Bill Richardson applauded a decision issued this week by the National Indian Gaming Commission that concludes an Oklahoma tribe cannot legally operate a casino on its Southern New Mexico trust land.

“This federal decision is clear and unambiguous – and it is a victory for the people of New Mexico who are opposed to an expansion of gaming beyond what has already been negotiated,” Governor Bill Richardson said. “The Fort Sill Apaches will violate federal law if they move forward with an illegal casino in Southern New Mexico.

“I have directed the State Police and the Gaming Control Board to remain vigilant and block access if they attempt to open a casino.”

Governor Richardson, backed by U.S. Senators Jeff Bingaman and Pete Domenici and New Mexico Attorney General Gary King, strongly opposed the illegal plans for a casino by the Fort Sill Apache Tribe, based in Oklahoma. The federal commission said in February that the proposed casino was probably not allowed under federal law.

On Tuesday, the commission issued a ruling that spells out the reasons why the Fort Sill cannot operate a casino in New Mexico. The commission agrees with the Governor’s position that Fort Sill failed to meet any of the specified exceptions set out in the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act in order to qualify to game on land taken into trust after October 17, 1988.

Governor Richardson worked with U.S. Senators Jeff Bingaman and Pete Domenici to try and convince U.S. Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne to intervene and prevent the opening of the casino.

When the land at Akela Flats was taken into federal trust for the tribe in June 2002, it was done with the explicit condition that the land was not to be used for gaming purposes. Former Gov. Gary Johnson had previously objected to the tribe’s effort to use this land

for gaming. The tribe promised the federal government and the State of New Mexico that they would never use this land for gaming.

#30#