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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6450

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October 17, 2008

George Skibine  
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for  
Policy and Economic Development of Indian Affairs  
United States Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Skibine,

Over the past year I have expressed my concern about Department of the Interior bureaucracy preventing the timely processing of oil and gas leases and permits on the Fort Berthold Reservation. Recent Department efforts to increase staffing at the local and regional offices serving Fort Berthold are greatly appreciated. I write today to urge you to act this year in creating an "Oil and Gas One-Stop-Shop" for the Fort Berthold Reservation.

In June 2008, I released a white paper which found that the Fort Berthold Agency Office did not have the staff to manage federal requirements for oil and gas development, that oil and gas development on Indian lands is subject to an extensive 49 step process and, in this Administration, the Bureau of Indian Affairs lacks consistent leadership.

I also met with Secretary Kempthorne and demanded that he take steps to expedite the processing of leases and permits. The Department's July 2008 plan promised additional employees and streamlining of the process. I understand that some of these new employees recently began working at the local and regional offices. I appreciate these efforts and hope they help improve the situation.

I believe the next step is establishing a one-stop-shop for oil and gas development which would go far in eliminating the barriers and time delays between the four Departmental agencies that oversee oil and gas development on Indian lands.

A one-stop-shop would co-locate employees of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Minerals Management Service, and Office of the Special Trustee under one roof at the Fort Berthold Agency Office. Having these employees working together in the same office, and hopefully with more compatible computer systems, would reduce the barriers between these agencies.

Because a one-stop-shop would combine multiple agencies under one roof, I also recommend that you consider establishing the one-stop-shop within the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs' office. Strong leadership at the Assistant Secretary level is needed to ensure that this multi-agency office runs smoothly and efficiently.

Thank you again for your efforts to date to improve oil and gas development on the Reservation. With a little more effort we may be able to further streamline the process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Byron L. Dorgan". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the left of a vertical line that runs down the right side of the page.

Byron L. Dorgan  
Chairman