

Statement of the Honorable Mark D. Boughton**Mayor of the City of Danbury, Connecticut****Testimony before the United States House of Representatives
Committee on Resources****September 25, 2002**

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify before your Committee today. I also want to thank you for your interest in an issue that can have a profound effect on the quality of life of not only my great city, but the entire eastern seaboard of the United States. I would like to thank Congresswoman Nancy Johnson for her vision in introducing this legislation.

I would also like to thank my friend Congressman Rob Simmons, for his tireless work on behalf of a critical issue that faces not just his district, but also all of Connecticut.

Ladies and Gentleman, the Tribal recognition system in the United States is broken. It is broken because the system is no longer seeking to right a wrong, the exploitation of Native Americans on this continent by the early settlers; it is now about a multi billion-dollar industry called gambling.

While the Bureau of Indian affairs and Congress decide how to restore balance to the recognition process, it is up to the cities and towns to wrestle with the fallout of proposed casinos and land claims. In short, as a mayor of a city of 75,000 residents, we must foot the bill for escalating legal costs to protect the quality of life that myself and my predecessors have worked to establish in our community.

Recently, if recognized, the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation has expressed interest in purchasing a large tract of land in Danbury, which was home to the world headquarters of Union Carbide. This property is approximately 600 acres of pristine woodland that is zoned for industrial use. Danbury receives approximately 4.5 million dollars per year in property taxes from this parcel. It is my vision that this property be developed to meet the needs of our dynamic economy and provide an economic engine well into the next century. I envision, housing, major corporations, and a minor league baseball stadium on this land. I did not envision a casino. A Casino on this site does not enhance our quality of life or our economic vitality. Traffic, public safety costs, emergency services, and the loss of tax revenue are just some of the negative impacts that Danbury faces if a casino is located at the Union Carbide site. At this point, the city along with our regional organization the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials has entered into the

recognition process as an interested party. We have convinced our local business leaders pay for a traffic study. However, because of financial constraints, we are participating at a very low level.

H.R. 992 will provide a city like Danbury with the necessary resources to oppose recognition when a community is threatened by a casino. In addition, it will also help protect communities who are faced with land claims. In Connecticut, several tribes have placed land claims on hundreds of acres of property before they received recognition in an effort force negotiations on the location of a proposed casino.

I only seek the ability to participate fully in the recognition and the land claim process. Allocation of dollars will give my city a jump-start in being an active participant. As I stated at the outset of my remarks, the process is broken. However, until there is time to review the process, H.R. 992 will go along way in helping cities like Danbury face this critical challenge. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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