

**Testimony of Congressman Howard P. “Buck” McKeon
On H.R. 2467 at the Committee on Natural Resources,
Subcommittee on Indian and Alaskan Native Affairs
January 25, 2012**

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Boren, and Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify on behalf of my legislation, H.R. 2467, and thank you for giving it a fair hearing. I also want to thank Bridgeport Indian Colony Chairman John Glazer for making the trip to Washington, D.C. to testify on behalf of the bill.

Mr. Chairman, the Bridgeport Indian Colony is a federally recognized Indian Tribe with a reservation located near the town of Bridgeport, in Mono County, California. The Tribe's reservation is approximately 40 acres, and was established by Federal law in 1974. However, the size of the current reservation is insufficient for the Tribe's housing and community development needs. In order to create space for economic development and housing, my legislation proposes to transfer from the BLM to the BIA to hold in trust for the Tribe one parcel of land contiguous to the Tribe's existing reservation, totaling approximately 31 acres. On this parcel, the Tribe plans to construct an RV park, gas station, convenience store, and residential housing for tribal members, as well as a recreational center to serve the greater community.

Mr. Chairman, many tribal members have expressed interest in moving back to the reservation if housing and job opportunities can be made available. And this bill will create jobs in a part of my district where unemployment is over 10 percent.

Additionally, my legislation would promote the health care of the Tribe and community by taking into trust a 7 acre BLM parcel where the Toiyabe Indian Health Project previously served the community, allowing the clinic to be reopened and returned to service. Currently, members of the Tribe have to drive 90 miles to Bishop to obtain healthcare services. In the 1980s, the Tribe applied for and received a Community Development Block Grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development in order to build a healthcare facility in Mono County. With Toiyabe Indian Health Project directing the project, the Camp Antelope Health Clinic was built on a 7.16 acre parcel of Federal land one mile north of Walker, California, approximately 30 miles from the Tribe's reservation – 60 miles closer than the Bishop health clinic. Unfortunately, the Toiyabe Indian Health Project closed the Camp Antelope Health Clinic in 2006. The Tribe and the Toiyabe Indian Health Project have agreed that the health clinic needs to be reopened and the investment of federal funds in the development of the health clinic from the CDBG grant adds to the importance of maintaining the parcel under federal ownership.

Following the hearing last year, I received concerns raised by the Bridgeport Public Utility District concerning an easement which crosses the first parcel proposed for transfer from the BLM to the BIA in trust for the Tribe. The services provided by the PUD both to the community of Bridgeport as well as the Tribe depend on the infrastructure where this easement is located. Currently, the easement is managed by the BLM and is subject to periodic renewal. I made changes to my legislation in the 112th Congress to clarify that this easement should

continue to be managed by the BLM as this has proven successful. I would support further clarifications within the bill to ensure the BLM continues to manage the easement as is currently operated to ensure the vital services of the PUD are protected while allowing the parcel to be transferred to trust for the benefit of the Bridgeport Indian Colony.

Mr. Chairman, the Mono County Board of Supervisors voted to support the land transfer in October of 2009, and agreed unanimously in April of 2010, to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Tribe, thus supporting the Tribe's efforts to have these parcels of land transferred into trust.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for holding this hearing. This land exchange will be mutually beneficial for all parties involved and I urge the subcommittee to move forward to markup the legislation during the 112th Congress. I look forward to answering any questions you may have about H.R. 2467 and thank you for your time.