

**STATEMENT  
OF  
CONGRESSMAN DARRELL ISSA  
  
BEFORE THE  
  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES  
  
REGARDING  
H.R. 3476**

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 2002**

**1328 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
10:00 A.M.**

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for holding a hearing on H.R. 3476, which will protect a 724-acre parcel of land known as the Great Oak Ranch Property from condemnation by San Diego Gas and Electric until a final decision is made by Secretary Gale Norton regarding their pending trust application.

First, I want to give you a brief background on why I introduced this bill. Last April, I was approached by the Pechanga Band of Luiseno Mission Indians concerning a developing situation involving land they recently purchased for the purpose of making their fragmented reservation whole again.

The celebration surrounding the purchase of this property was short-lived. On March 23, 2001, San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) released a map proposing 17 different alignments for a thirty-one mile, 500,000-volt Valley-Rainbow transmission line project. Unfortunately, one alignment goes through the heart of the Great Oak Ranch Property. The City of Temecula has come out in opposition to this alignment and this project, questioning its need and justification.

The interesting thing is that the Great Oak Ranch Property alignment selected is not SDG&E's preferred route. The preferred route is intended to go around the periphery of the existing reservation and SDG&E is using a threat of a transmission line through the Great Oak Ranch Property to gain an unfair advantage against the tribe into granting an easement.

On March 21, 2002, the Department of Interior registered a Notice of Decision to accept the Great Oak Ranch Property in trust. That same day, a SDG&E spokesperson stated in a local paper that they would plan to appeal this Notice of Decision. If this happens, an appeal could potentially delay the Pechanga Indians' land into trust application for years, with the threat of condemnation hanging over them the entire time.

I respect the committee's stance that placing land into trust should be done administratively, based on the application's merits, with the benefit of an environmental assessment and community input. My bill simply allows the Pechanga Indians application to continue through the administrative process and prevent any encumbrance from being placed on the land until a final decision is issued by the Secretary of Interior.

The Pechanga reservation has received overwhelming public support regarding their attempts to protect the Great Oak Ranch property from condemnation. The city councils, state legislators, such as State Senator Jim Brulte, who will be testifying shortly, and members of Congress, including Congresswoman Mary Bono and Congressman Ken Calvert, a distinguished member of this committee, have all voiced or written support for this endeavor. Mr. Chairman, I would like to submit for the record a packet of letters in support of Pechanga's land into trust application. Many of these letters are from California State Assembly Members, demonstrating how important this application is to the state.

Mr. Chairman, H.R. 3476 is a good bill. It will protect the Pechanga Indians' land from condemnation, while Secretary Norton decides on the application. Having finally connecting the two parcels of the reservation with the Great Oak Ranch Property, the Pechanga Indians shouldn't have to worry about the land being condemned and divided again.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before for your committee. I stand ready to answer any questions that you may have.