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**BREAKING NEWS: GILA RIVER, SALT RIVER
INDIAN COMMUNITIES ANNOUNCE
IMMEDIATE RESIGNATION FROM
ARIZONA INDIAN GAMING ASSOCIATION**

Tribes: The "actions of the Tohono O'odham Nation to secretly develop a casino in direct opposition to the promises made by AIGA and other tribes has destroyed AIGA's unity and undermined the principles of the organization."



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**MEDIA ALERT: GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY,
SALT RIVER PIMA-MARICOPA INDIAN COMMUNITY ANNOUNCE
RESIGNATION FROM THE ARIZONA INDIAN GAMING ASSOCIATION**

Tribes: Resignation Comes After AIGA "Sits Mute" While Tohono O'odham Nation Defies AIGA's Long-Held Position Against New Casinos in Metropolitan Phoenix

Sacaton, AZ – On Friday morning, May 6, 2016, leaders of the Gila River Indian Community and the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community notified the member Tribes of the Arizona Indian Gaming Association that the Valley's two largest gaming tribes would immediately resign their membership in AIGA. In a letter hand-delivered and presented to AIGA's assembled leadership, GRIC and SRP-MIC leaders jointly explained that the gaming association, which has advocated for 18 Arizona tribes since 1994, could no longer fulfill its stated purpose of "speaking on behalf of its member Tribes with one, unified voice ... on Indian gaming issues."

The letter, reprinted in full below, explains: "The actions of the Tohono O'odham Nation to secretly develop a casino in direct opposition to the promises made by AIGA and other tribes has destroyed AIGA's unity and undermined the principles of the organization. We, regretfully, have determined that we can no longer in good conscience be members of AIGA and are withdrawing from the organization effective immediately."

Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community President Delbert Ray said: "After considerable deliberation, the Salt River Indian Community tribal council has voted to withdraw from the Arizona Indian Gaming Association, effective immediately. We take no pleasure in this decision, but believe we must do this because it is in the best interest of our community and for gaming in Arizona.

"In recent days, AIGA's leadership has failed to speak out on what we consider the most important issue before Arizona's tribes -- the actions of the Tohono O'odham Nation to use deception and fraud to secretly obtain land, hide it in a shell corporation, and develop a new casino in Glendale, breaking the promises to other tribes, state officials and Arizona's voters. Yet, instead of speaking out against this shameful behavior and standing up for the integrity of the gaming compact, AIGA's leadership chose instead to remain silent. I'm proud to say that the Salt River Indian Community chooses a different path. We choose to honor the promise we made to Arizona voters that there would be no additional casinos in the Phoenix metro area. Therefore, we can no longer be members of AIGA."

Gila River Indian Community Gov. Stephen Roe Lewis said: "This morning, the Gila River Indian Community formally resigned from the Arizona Indian Gaming Association. This was not a decision made in haste by our Community. This week, the GRIC Tribal Council voted unanimously to withdraw from AIGA because this organization can no longer speak for its 18 member Tribes with 'one, unified voice' on critically important tribal gaming issues.

"Unfortunately, AIGA's unity and effectiveness have been undermined in recent years by the actions of the Tohono O'odham Nation, which secretly developed a metropolitan Phoenix area casino in direct opposition to the official positions adopted and reaffirmed over many years by AIGA and its member Tribes.

"Because AIGA has stood mute on this issue – and because the organization can no longer speak with “one, unified voice” – our Community has reluctantly decided to resign from AIGA. This decision was carefully considered by our Tribal Council to ensure we can continue to work in good conscience to protect the promises made to Arizona's tribes, residents and elected leaders."

The text of the letter from the Gila River Indian Community, as signed by Gov. Lewis, states:

Dear Tribal Leaders:

The Gila River Indian Community has actively supported AIGA for many, many years. We have worked with other member-tribes to accomplish AIGA's purpose of "speaking on behalf of its member Tribes with one, unified voice...on Indian gaming issues." AIGA for many years fulfilled this purpose and operated with remarkable unity of purpose. But the actions of the Tohono O'odham Nation to secretly develop a casino in direct opposition to the promises made by AIGA and other tribes has destroyed AIGA's unity and undermined the principles of the organization. We, regretfully, have determined that we can no longer in good conscience be members of AIGA and are withdrawing from the organization effective immediately.

When compact negotiations began back in 2000, 16 tribes united together and signed an Agreement that established tribal principles for the negotiations. The Nation's current Chairman signed that Agreement. In that written Agreement, each tribe expressly agreed to "maintain consistent positions regarding the terms and issues at issue with the State of Arizona in compact negotiations," and, importantly, to "notify other Tribal Leaders if they...must take positions or actions inconsistent with those of the other Tribal Leaders."

While the four Phoenix-metro tribes and other tribes were considering Governor Hull's demand in the negotiations that each Tribe to give up its right to build an additional casino, the Nation now admits that behind the scenes, it was secretly searching for land to operate an additional casino in the Phoenix area. Instead of notifying other Tribal leaders of its plans during the negotiations, the Nation actively worked to conceal its actions. The Nation admits that it bought the Glendale land using a Delaware shell company "to conceal its ownership."

In fact, during the compact negotiations, the Nation's representatives anticipated that Gila River, Salt River and Fort McDowell would object to the Nation's silence once its plans for a Phoenix casino were revealed. But even that did not compel the Nation to notify other Tribes. The Nation stayed silent.

The Nation's failure to disclose its secret plans for a Phoenix-area casino during compact negotiations, before other Tribes signed the new compacts and gave up their existing rights to build an additional casino, violated the Nation's contractual and moral duties to notify the other fifteen tribes that the Nation was taking "actions inconsistent with those of other Tribal Leaders."

Governor Ducey and Attorney General Brnovich have called the Nation's Glendale casino "contrary to the public interest" and "the product of fraud, fraudulent concealment and misrepresentation." The Arizona Republic called the Nation a tribe "using subterfuge and deceit to break into Phoenix's gambling market."

While to date the Nation has been able to escape the State's claims of fraud and misrepresentation, the federal court recently ruled that those claims will finally be litigated.

All Tribes in AIGA must acknowledge that since the Nation asked the Department of the Interior to acquire the Glendale parcel for casino purposes in 2009, AIGA has not spoken with one, unified voice. AIGA has been crippled by disunity.

Let us review AIGA's position on this issue.

When then-Governor Hull announced a compact had been successfully negotiated with the 16 Tribes, her February 20, 2002 press statement said that one of the "major points" achieved in the agreement was that there would be "[n]o additional casinos allowed in the Phoenix metropolitan area and one additional casino in the Tucson area."

On April 3, 2002, AIGA staff produced a Legislative Tracking Report that commented on Senate Bill 1001, the bill which encapsulated the compact agreement reached between AIGA tribes and the State. The AIGA Report stated that the bill "Represents the agreement reached by the Arizona Indian Gaming Association and the Governor. Provides for a reduction in the number [of] authorized gaming facilities[,] with no additional facilities in the Phoenix metro area and only one new facility in the Tucson area."

Five days later, on April 8, 2002, AIGA's Executive Director, David LaSarte, testified before the Arizona Senate Committee on Government. He stated that the negotiated compact would "limit[] the number of facilities in the Phoenix metro area to the current number, and also allow[]...the possibility of one additional facility in Tucson."

Then, as a critical part of the effort to get voters to approve the compact, AIGA assisted in the preparation of a Voter Information Pamphlet widely distributed to voters by AIGA Tribes. Several Tribes, including the Nation, provided major funding for the pamphlet. The tribal pamphlet expressly promised voters that under the compacts authorized by Prop 202 "there will be no additional facilities authorized in Phoenix."

Finally, in April, 2011, AIGA overwhelmingly passed a resolution to reaffirm the promises tribes repeatedly made to the State and voters during the Prop 202 campaign, that there would be “no additional casinos in the Phoenix metro area.” The resolution stated: “The Arizona Indian Gaming Association hereby reaffirms the promises made to Arizona voters in 2002 during the successful campaign to enact Proposition 202 (“Prop”) which authorized Tribal-State Gaming Compacts.”

*Thus, AIGA consistently has said there would be no additional casinos in the Phoenix metro area during the term of the current compacts. This has been, **and it remains**, AIGA’s official position on the matter.*

Despite this, the Nation asserts in federal court proceedings that it can operate four additional class III casinos in the Phoenix-metro area. What does AIGA do? It sits mute, even though the Nation’s actions are inconsistent with AIGA’s position. AIGA has never voted to change its position and maintain that under the compacts, additional casinos are allowed in the Phoenix metro area.

AIGA’s voice largely has been silent on what we consider to be the greatest threat facing its member-tribes - that Arizona voters will think that all Tribes have broken our promise to them, leading to the ultimate loss of tribal gaming exclusivity and destruction of the Compact’s balanced structure that benefits gaming and non-gaming tribes alike. AIGA’s inability to oppose such a great threat to Arizona tribal gaming leads us to this day.

For most of the past 20 years, Arizona Tribes have been unified on gaming matters. That unity has been the most important source of our strength and success. But, when one tribe deliberately chooses a secret path that it knows will create disunity within AIGA, the organization’s continued silence in the face of deceit weakens us all.

We choose a different path. We choose not to ignore deceit and not to ignore the AIGA Resolution. We choose to honor the promise we made to Arizona voters that there would be “no additional casinos in the Phoenix metro area.” For these reasons, we can no longer remain members of AIGA. Our decision has not been made in haste. We leave reluctantly, but with confidence that our decision is in the best interests of Arizona’s gaming and non-gaming tribes.

We wish health and happiness for all of you, and would like to express our sincere thanks to AIGA staff for their hard work under very difficult circumstances.

Sincerely,

Stephen R. Lewis
Governor

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