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Jena Band of Choctaw Indians

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June 25, 2007

VIA FACSIMILE (202) 354-3232

The Honorable Ellen Segal Huvelle

United States District Court for the District of Columbia

333 Constitution Avenue NW

Washington, D. C. 20001

Re: United States v. Griles; 1:07-CR-00079; United States District Court for the District of Columbia

Dear Honorable Judge Huvelle:

I am the Chief of the Jena Band of Choctaw Indians (the "Tribe"), the small 250 member tribe in central Louisiana that was victimized by the corrupt behavior and unlawful activities of James Steven Griles and Jack Abramoff, and I write to you on behalf of my people to request that this Honorable Court not grant Mr. Griles' request for leniency and, instead, sentence him to the maximum sentence possible under federal law.

My Tribe was victimized by Mr. Griles and Mr. Abramoff for at least three years (2001 to 2004) in our attempts to have land taken into trust for gaming, first in Vinton, Louisiana and then in Logansport, Louisiana. What was most frustrating during those three years is the fact that we knew we were being victimized by political corruption, money, and greed, and yet, there was nothing we could do. I have never been more frustrated in my 33 years of Tribal government than on April 2, 2002, when Mr. Abramoff was featured on the front page of The New York Times as the \$500.00-an-hour lobbyist who has used his close ties with conservatives in Congress to become one of the most influential lobbyist in Washington, D. C., and a Vice Chairman of another Louisiana tribe who had enjoyed lucrative Indian gaming in our state for nearly ten years, proudly proclaimed that his tribe had paid \$1.76 million to Mr. Abramoff to have our compact with the State of Louisiana for a location in Vinton, Louisiana disapproved. Do you know what my landless tribe could have done with \$1.76 million, not to mention the \$30 million that we later learned had in fact been spent in opposing our gaming efforts? My frustration continued to grow in 2003 when, while we were attempting to cooperate with both federal and state officials to have land taken into trust in Logansport, Desoto Parish, Louisiana and were incurring hundreds of thousands of dollars in the process, we learned that the three highest ranking members of the House of Representatives, who had no interest in Louisiana gaming, sent a letter of opposition to gaming to the Secretary of the Department of the Interior and specifically mentioned the Jena Band of Choctaw Indians' efforts. We learned, further, that the source of the letter was Jack Abramoff. Again, we knew that political influence, money, and greed were at the core of the opposition to our legitimate efforts to pursue a gaming location and could do nothing to stop it.

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Needless to say we watched with great interest the Senate Indian Affairs Committee's investigation of the Abramoff scandal, including the testimony of the Department of the Interior officials, and have continued to watch the fate of those who opposed our efforts through unlawful means because of money and greed. We do not yet have a gaming operation but should begin construction of a Class III facility in Grant Parish, Louisiana in the next six months. The three years and millions of dollars lost because of political corruption at the highest level have cost my people dearly in terms of improved education, health, social, and governmental opportunities. I look forward to that day in the very near future when my people will enjoy the same benefits that gaming has enabled the members of the three other federally recognized Indian tribes to enjoy.

While I do not place all the blame on Mr. Giles or Mr. Abramoff for the injustices done to my Tribe, I do believe that these two individuals were the primary culprits and request that you impose the maximum penalty possible on Mr. Griles. Further, I do not think that the totality of the Abramoff scandal and others involved has come to light and believe that you can send a message to the American people, which includes the members of my Tribe, that corrupt behavior in government will be dealt with to the fullest extent of the law.

Sincerely,

JENA BAND OF CHOCTAW INDIANS

By: 

Christine Norris, Tribal Chief