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**For Immediate Release**

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## **UNITED STATES SENATE PASSES GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY HOMELANDS LEGISLATION**

(Sacaton, Arizona) Last evening the United States Senate unanimously passed H.R. 4032, the Gila River Indian Community Federal Rights-of-Way, Easements and Boundary Clarification Act. The passage of this legislation comes after the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs held a legislative hearing on November 14, 2018, followed by a bi-partisan Committee vote on November 29<sup>th</sup>. The legislation had already passed the House of Representatives on July 17, 2018, so the next step is for the President to sign the bill into law.

The legislation fully implements a prior settlement agreement with the federal government which settles a trust accounting suit brought by the Community and requires recordation of all federal rights-of-way on the Reservation. The legislation also clarifies a section of the Community Reservation boundary that will avoid a title dispute with the City of Phoenix. In exchange for the lands at issue in the disputed area along the Northwest boundary of the Reservation, the bill allows the Community to add approximately 3,400 acres of culturally important lands in the Estrella Mountains to its Reservation. The Community is in the process of purchasing this culturally significant land from the Bureau of Land Management.

Governor Stephen Roe Lewis expressed his appreciation of the Senate action on this legislation in the remaining weeks of this Congress, stating *“On behalf of the Gila River Indian Community, I want to thank the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs and the United States Senate for making this legislation a priority. This bill is of critical importance to the Community’s effort to build housing, manage our water resources, and acquire culturally significant lands. We look forward to the President’s signature on this bill so it can become law and we can begin the implementation process.”*

Governor Lewis also extended his appreciation to Congressman Tom O’Halloran for sponsoring the legislation, along with co-sponsors Congressmen Biggs, Gallego, Gosar, and Schweikert. Governor Lewis also applauded the efforts of Congressman Grijalva, Ranking Member on the House Natural Resources Committee and Senator Kyl, member of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs who were instrumental in helping move this bill through the Congress.

Congressman Tom O’Halloran, the bill’s sponsor in the House of Representatives, stated *“I am pleased to see the Senate take up this important legislation and fulfill its obligation to the Gila River Indian Community. Once signed into law, this bipartisan measure will allow the Community to provide greater opportunities for their people and allow them to continue to grow and thrive. I look forward to working with Governor Lewis and state and federal officials to implement the provisions of this law.”*

(More)

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Congressman Biggs of Arizona, one of the original supporters of the bill in the House, offered his congratulations, saying, *“I congratulate Governor Stephen Roe Lewis and the Tribal Council for championing this legislative victory. I was honored to join the Arizona Congressional delegation in support of this bill which is critical for the Gila River Indian Community. I look forward to continue working with Governor Lewis and the Gila River Indian Community on future endeavors.”*

Congressman Gallego, also of Arizona, added, *“I’m pleased to see my Senate colleagues have advanced this legislation to bring mutually-beneficial clarity to the Gila River Indian Community, City of Phoenix, and the federal government. Formalizing this agreement will allow the Community to make new progress on critical development efforts and continue stewardship for cultural lands.”*

Congressman David Schweikert of Arizona had the following to say, *“This legislation has brought members of the Arizona delegation together to support the Gila River Indian Community and to create more than a land settlement agreement. The legislation will ensure access to all federal rights-of-way, along with adding close to 3,400 acres of culturally appropriate federal land benefits the Community rightfully deserves. I am very pleased to see H.R. 4032 be passed, as it will directly support the tribal Community.”*

The President is expected to sign this legislation within the next ten days at which point the legislation will become law.

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*Gila River Indian Community located on 372,000 acres in south-central Arizona and home to the indigenous O’odham (Pima) and Pee Posh (Maricopa) people. The Tribe is comprised of seven districts, the administrative offices and departments are located in Sacaton, and serve the people throughout these seven community districts. 100% of its profits from gaming and 17 other Enterprises are utilized by the community providing services and opportunities to achieve the highest quality of life.*

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