

**STATEMENT
OF
DUANE BIG EAGLE
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE
JUNE 15, 2004**

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, I am Duane Big Eagle, Chairman of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe. Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify in support of the Tribal Parity Act, S. 1530.

First, I would also like to thank Senator Daschle for the introduction of the legislation, and Senator Johnson for cosponsoring. The legislation before you this morning is of great importance to the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe. We support it and urge its favorable consideration by the Committee and the Congress.

The Crow Creek Sioux Tribe is, like Lower Brule, a constituent band of the Great Sioux Nation and a signatory of the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 and the Fort Sully Treaty of 1865. The Missouri River establishes our western boundary, directly across the river from Lower Brule. The Big Bend Dam connects our two reservations and its

construction effected our two reservations in a similar manner. It flooded our best bottomlands and required us to relocate our town; for us that is Fort Thompson.

In 1996, the Congress enacted Public Law 104-223 creating the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe Infrastructure Development Trust Fund Act. It established a Trust Fund of \$27,500,000 for the benefit of the tribe. The legislation before you today, S. 1530, the Tribal Parity Act, would compliment that earlier law.

We are not seeking any advantage over any other tribe, just parity. The additional compensation called for in the Tribal Parity Act was computed by Dr. Lawson based on methodology used by the GAO for other tribes. The amount included in the legislation, was not computed by either the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe or the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe. It is the amount that Dr. Lawson has computed would bring us up to the standard used by the Congress for Cheyenne River.

Candidly, Mr. Chairman, our tribe needs every dollar that is fairly owed to us. Our unemployment rate is too high, our health problems are a significant barrier to progress, and our education and infrastructure systems are in need of great improvement.

With the interest on the trust fund, we could much more effectively meet the challenges we face on the reservation, and these challenges can not be overstated. We are a small tribe with great human needs. The Tribal Parity Act is vital to the progress and future of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe.

Mr. Chairman, we all know....painfully....the history of the reservations in the United States and the history of the Great Sioux Nation tribes, in particular. We are not near any major population center. We have a casino, as does Lower Brule, but that will never be a major source of income. For us to stand a chance, we must, at a minimum, be fairly compensated for the land that was taken by the Pick-Sloan. The \$78 million in the Parity bill for Crow Creek, if added to our current trust fund, would give us a trust fund of \$105 million. The interest on this trust fund would provide Crow Creek with the resources necessary to make a significant difference in the lives of our people and the lives of our children and grandchildren. It would, in short, give our Tribe a second chance. Thank you for your consideration. I would be pleased to answer any questions.