

Washington, DC -- Today, U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer (D-NY) and U.S. Representatives Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) and John M. McHugh (R-Pierrepont Manor) condemned the U.S. Department of the Interior's decision to place 18 acres of land in Verona, NY, into trust for the Oneida Indian Nation without public notification.

"It was flat wrong for a lame duck administration to give away public land in the dead of night with no opportunity for public review," **Schumer said**. "I will work with my delegation partners to try to get these 18 acres undone and make sure it doesn't spread. I intend to get to the bottom of this pronto."

"This action by the Interior Department is unacceptable," **Arcuri said**. "The timing of this action – by officials with close ties to the Oneidas, just before they leave office – looks very suspicious. The Interior Department recommends that we negotiate and then they act, without notice, negotiation, or any contact whatsoever with local governments. This serves only to inflame an already volatile situation and makes it more difficult for both sides to find common ground and reach a settlement in the future. I will continue to press the Interior Department for the answers Upstate New Yorkers deserve."

"I find it incredibly frustrating that the Department of the Interior has made an effort to transfer this property into trust, and has continued to act contrary to the best interests of the people of Oneida and Madison Counties," **McHugh said**. "This decision is yet another example of what has been a disturbing pattern of behavior by the Department, which claims it wants to promote a 'good neighbor' policy. I see no reason why the Department could not have, at the minimum, consulted local officials before taking this step, and am disappointed that the Department has chosen to take this action despite pending federal lawsuits regarding this issue. I will continue to work with my Congressional colleagues to ensure we get answers as to how this decision was made, and I want to make clear that I will continue to support my constituents and the affected counties with the assistance they need to achieve a better outcome."

On December 30, 2008, the Department of Interior formally took into trust approximately 18 acres of federal land, on behalf of the Oneida Nation of New York (OIN). The land was part of the Verona Test Facility, formerly owned by the Air Force. The Air Force ceased to use the land in 1999, and it was turned over to the General Services Administration (GSA), which oversees federal buildings and lands. According to the Department of Interior, the property was placed in trust pursuant to a federal law that requires the GSA to transfer to the Department of Interior any "excess real property located within the reservation of any" federally-recognized Indian

tribe. The law requires that the Secretary of Interior hold the land in trust for the “benefit and use” of that tribe.

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