

Senator calls for inquiry into funds spent on conference

FARMINGTON, N.M. (AP) — U.S. Sen. Pete Domenici is calling for a federal inquiry into whether federal funds were misappropriated or misused for an American Indian education conference in Hawaii.

If so, the New Mexico Republican said action needs to be taken.

More than 360 people representing the Navajo Nation preregistered for the four-day conference held last month in Honolulu. The preregistration fee for the event, hosted by the National Indian Education Association, was \$400 per person.

It's not clear how many people

who preregistered represented Navajo government, public school districts on the Navajo Nation or other groups.

Although some of the travelers might have paid their own expense, some used tribal funds or federal funds to pay for the trip, the Daily Times reported Saturday.

The Central Consolidated school district sent eight people to the convention at a cost of about \$15,000. Interim superintendent Charles Hayes said he considers the money well spent.

"I am sorry we couldn't send more," he said. "I'd do it again."

The Navajo Nation's legisla-

tive branch sent 18 delegates. Tribal Council Speaker Lawrence Morgan has said it's not unusual for tribal lawmakers to travel on behalf of the sovereign nation.

Navajo President Joe Shirley Jr. was invited to speak at the conference and took his wife and an assistant with him, the president's spokesman, George Hardeen, has said.

The Daily Times has criticized the Navajo Nation government and school districts on its opinion pages for the number of representatives sent, claiming that fewer representatives could have brought home the

lessons they learned and shared them with others.

Central Consolidated school board member Hoskie Benally Jr. said he views the news coverage as deliberately inflammatory.

"I see that the motive of the newspaper is to plant the thought in the mind of the community people that something may illegally be happening, and that's not fair," he said.

Domenici said he personally called Shirley to discuss the matter and to request that the Navajo Nation make all information about the trip a matter of public record.

"I am concerned that those who represent the Navajo people have not accounted for this trip," Domenici told the newspaper Friday.

In a letter to Inspector General Earl Devancy of the Department of Interior, Domenici asked that the federal office review the trip taken by Navajo

representatives and "take appropriate action in accordance with all applicable laws, rules and regulations."

"It is important that The Daily Times be held accountable for their reporting and that the Navajo Nation also be held accountable for their actions," he said.

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Next deadline to submit items to the Spilyay Tymoo is Friday, Nov. 30.

New spirit of cooperation between tribal, state courts

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The chief judge of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe has agreed that the tribal court should recognize decisions made in other tribal courts and state courts.

In turn, that means state courts in South Dakota are now authorized to recognize the orders or judgments of the Standing Rock court.

"It is my belief that the preservation and expansion of the sovereignty of the Standing Rock Sioux Nation depends upon the respect of our fellow sovereigns as well," said Standing Rock Chief Judge William Zuger. "I am pleased that this will result in the recognition of our judgments in the courts of South Dakota."

The Standing Rock Sioux Reservation straddles the North Dakota and South Dakota border. Fort Yates, N.D., is the site of the tribal court.

State law allows South Dakota courts to honor decisions in tribal courts when the tribes grant legal reciprocity to orders and judgments of state courts.

The two-way judicial street is effective immediately, said South Dakota Supreme Court Chief Justice David Gilbertson.

"It is my hope that this rule granting mutual recognition of court orders will aid in providing justice to all citizens of South Dakota," he said.

Judge grants injunction against 'tribe'

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — A Texas judge has granted a permanent injunction against the Wichita-based Kaweah (kuh-WAY) Indian Nation and its self-proclaimed chief, Malcomb Webber.

The unrecognized tribe is accused of defrauding illegal

immigrants by falsely claiming they could get Social Security numbers if they bought tribal memberships. The Texas attorney general's office had filed a lawsuit accusing Webber and his group of violating the Texas Deceptive Trade Practices Act.

The lawsuit is still pending

against two other defendants. And a spokesman for the Texas attorney general's office said a ruling on any penalties and restitution will be made after the entire case is settled.

A court-appointed attorney for Webber has said Webber was a victim of renegade underlings.

Third Pine Ridge official pleads guilty

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A third former Oglala Sioux Tribe official has acknowledged that she stole from the tribe on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Kim Colhoff, 51, of Pine Ridge, who was the tribe's payroll supervisor, pleaded guilty in federal court in Rapid City to theft from a

tribal organization.

She could be sentenced to up to five years in prison Jan. 28, according to federal prosecutors.

Former treasurer David Rabbit Sr. earlier pleaded guilty and was ordered to repay nearly \$10,000 and serve five years of probation for not repaying payroll advances.

And a jury last month convicted former tribal vice president Eileen Janis of theft. She also could get up to five years in prison when she's sentenced Jan. 28.

The thefts happened in 2003 and 2004, according to court documents.

Crist, tribe sign deal to expand Indian gambling, state gets cash

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Existing Indian gambling facilities in Florida will be able to add Las Vegas-style slots and card games like blackjack, and the state will get a cut of the money under an agreement signed Wednesday by Gov. Charlie Crist and leaders of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

The 25-year deal will mean a minimum of \$100 million a year for the state, and while the Legislature will determine how that's spent, Crist suggested it should go almost entirely for education.

The Legislature may fight the agreement anyway, with some House members saying the deal isn't valid without their OK.

Crist, a Republican who said while campaigning that he opposed the expansion of gambling, said he didn't really have a choice in the matter, contending that the federal government

was set to allow the Seminoles to expand their gambling offerings anyway.

It would have been irresponsible, Crist said, to bypass an opportunity to have a say in the details of what exactly is allowed at the casinos and how they are regulated, and to leave on the table millions of dollars that will be generated at the seven existing facilities on tribal lands.

Crist was up against a Thursday deadline set by the U.S. Department of the Interior, and he said he was told by federal officials that if a state deal weren't signed Washington would move forward with allowing the Seminoles to have slot machines.

"To allow the people of Florida to not share in possibly billions of dollars of revenue over time, that is a gamble I am not willing to take," Crist said.

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