



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Ask your Federal Representatives to Support Legislation Reimbursing Local Counties Impacted By Indian Land Trust

MICHAEL F. NOZZOLIO June 20, 2011

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One of the most important and serious issues facing property taxpayers in Cayuga and Seneca Counties is the Cayuga Indian Nation's application for trust status on land they have purchased in Cayuga and Seneca County. If approved, the Cayuga's can request that ALL the land that they have purchased in Cayuga and Seneca County be removed from the tax rolls. Simply put, it means they will pay NO property taxes on all the acres of land that they now own in our two counties. Their application for trust status is currently being reviewed by the Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs. If approved, the loss of this taxable land will be devastating to our local economy.

Many years ago, while serving as legal counsel to former U.S. Congressman Gary Lee, I worked with the Congressman to defeat a settlement proposal with the Cayuga Indians. We defeated it for many reasons, and one of the most flagrant reasons was that the agreement failed to provide any kind of financial reimbursement to local governments and schools for land taken off the tax rolls by the Cayugas. Congressman Lee, who represented our region in the United States House of Representatives at the time, believed that Congress should have demanded payments in lieu of taxes as they did in settling other Indian land claims in states such as Alaska, Rhode Island and Connecticut.

It is very good that U.S. Senator Charles Schumer and Congressman Bill Owens have introduced legislation at the federal level (S.988/H.R. 1882), to fully reimburse counties for lost property tax revenue when Indian land is placed into trust by the federal government. I applaud Senator Schumer for working to address the financial needs of our local property taxpayers who will undoubtedly face the loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost tax revenue if the federal government grants trust status to the Cayuga Indians. I would urge all concerned property taxpayers to contact your federal representatives: U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, U.S. Congressman Richard Hanna and U.S. Congresswoman Ann Marie Buerkle, to urge them to co-sponsor and support this important legislation. Attached for your information and review is a copy of S.988/H.R. 1882.