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Secretary Norton Rejects Golden Hill Paugussett Appeal

Interior's June 2004 ruling upheld that petitioning group fails to meet Federal acknowledgment criteria

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Secretary of the Interior Gale A. Norton has upheld a June 2004 decision by former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs Aurene M. Martin, who declined to acknowledge as an Indian tribe a group known as the Golden Hill Paugussett Tribe of Indians. The petitioning group, headquartered in Trumbull, Connecticut, did not successfully demonstrate that it meets all seven mandatory criteria for Federal acknowledgment as an Indian tribe under Federal regulations.

In October 2004, the group's submission of eleven potential grounds for reconsideration before the Interior Board of Indian Appeals (IBIA) were each determined to be outside the scope of IBIA's jurisdiction and referred to Secretary Norton for her review. Under governing regulations, it is within the discretion of the Secretary whether to ask the current Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs to review the matter or to let the June decision stand. Secretary Norton has informed the petitioner that none of the issues it has raised warrant further consideration, that the decision to decline acknowledgment of the Golden Hill Paugussett group is the final action of the Department and is effective immediately.

Federal acknowledgment of a group as an Indian tribe establishes a government-to-government relationship between the United States and an Indian tribe, and is a prerequisite to the protection, services and benefits of the Federal government available to Indian tribes by virtue of their status as tribes.

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