



Tohono O'odham Nation's West Valley Land Closer to Becoming Part of the Tribe's Reservation, Feds Decide

By [Monica Alonzo](#), Fri., Jul. 23 2010 @ 6:28PM

After a long battle, the Tohono O'odham Nation emerged victorious today when the feds accepted the tribe's West Valley land into "trust."

This isn't the final step, but it is a major one for the Indian tribe. It means the Tohono O'odham Nation is closer to building its proposed \$600 million resort-style casino in the West Valley near 95th and Northern avenues.

It is a stunning victory for the Nation, which was pitted against Governor Jan Brewer, Senators John McCain and Jon Kyl, local lawmakers, the Gila River Indian Community, Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon, Glendale Mayor Elaine Scruggs, and a horde of other Valley politicians.

Arizona politicians put all the political pressure they could muster on the Department of Interior and Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Larry Echo Hawk.

"The decision by the Department of Interior is a major step in the process," Ned Norris Jr., Chairman of the Tohono O'odham Nation, said in a statement. "The Nation believes that this puts us a step closer to the realization of an economic development project that is vital to the well-being of the Nation and that will make thousands of desperately needed jobs available to our neighbors."

To be sure, the Nation does have its supporters. The mayors from Peoria and Tolleson are among them, and are excited about the prospect of the new jobs the resort and casino project will create.

Amid the celebration, however, there is the reality that Glendale officials, chief opponents of the proposed casino because it neighbors their city, have pledged to wage legal battles to prevent the project from being built.

More on the Department of Interior's decision later. Meantime, [click here to read "Wanna Bet?"](#) -- a *New Times* story about the Tohono O'odham Nation's struggles, why the tribe, headquartered in the Tucson area, wants to build a casino in the West Valley and the reasons behind Arizona politicians' staunch opposition to the West Valley casino.