

**Statement by President George H.W. Bush Reaffirming the Government-to-Government  
Relationship Between the Federal Government and Tribal Governments  
June 14, 1991**

On January 24, 1983, the Reagan-Bush Administration issued a statement on Indian policy recognizing and reaffirming a government-to-government relationship between Indian tribes and the Federal Government. This relationship is the cornerstone of the Bush-Quayle Administration's policy of fostering tribal self-government and self-determination.

This government-to-government relationship is the result of sovereign and independent tribal governments being incorporated into the fabric of our Nation, of Indian tribes becoming what our courts have come to refer to as quasi-sovereign domestic dependent nations. Over the years the relationship has flourished, grown, and evolved into a vibrant partnership in which over 500 tribal governments stand shoulder to shoulder with the other governmental units that form our Republic.

This is now a relationship in which tribal governments may choose to assume the administration of numerous Federal programs pursuant to the 1975 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act.

This is a partnership in which an Office of Self-Governance has been established in the Department of the Interior and given the responsibility of working with tribes to craft creative ways of transferring decision-making powers over tribal government functions from the Department to tribal governments.

An Office of American Indian Trust will be established in the Department of the Interior and given the responsibility of overseeing the trust responsibility of the Department and of insuring that no Departmental action will be taken that will adversely affect or destroy those physical assets that the Federal Government holds in trust for the tribes.

I take pride in acknowledging and reaffirming the existence and durability of our unique government-to-government relationship.

Within the White House I have designated a senior staff member, my Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, as my personal liaison with all Indian tribes. While it is not possible for a President or his small staff to deal directly with the multiplicity of issues and problems presented by each of the 510 tribal entities in the Nation now recognized by and dealing with the Department of the Interior, the White House will continue to interact with Indian tribes on an intergovernmental basis.

The concepts of forced termination and excessive dependency on the Federal Government must now be relegated, once and for all, to the history books. Today we move forward toward a permanent relationship of understanding and trust, a relationship in which the tribes of the nation sit in positions of dependent sovereignty along with the other governments that compose the family that is America.