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January 23, 2006

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**ITMA CALLS ON NORTON TO APPOINT  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR INDIAN AFFAIRS**  
*Vacant position adversely affecting Indian Country*

*Albuquerque, NM*-- The Intertribal Monitoring Association (ITMA) called on Interior Secretary Gale Norton today to fill the appointment of Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs.

At a membership meeting of ITMA last week it was determined that the unfilled position of Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs is having an adverse impact on Indian Country and must be filled immediately. In a letter to Secretary Norton ITMA Chairman Chief Jim Gray expressed frustration that the position has remained vacant.

"We believe the absence of an Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs is and will continue to have an adverse impact on policy, budgetary and other important considerations affecting Indian country," said ITMA Chairman Chief Jim Gray.

In the last five years two individuals were nominated and confirmed by the Senate to be Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. Neal McCaleb served 19 months and Dave Anderson served 16 months in the position. The position has remained vacant for a total of more than two years.

Gray concluded, "the Administration, Congress and Indian country are at a critical juncture with respect to the Department of the Interior's trust reform regulatory and policy initiatives, pending trust reform legislation, and the *Cobell* litigation as well numerous trust fund related cases filed by Indian tribes. We hope this position will be filled immediately."

ITMA is a national tribal consortium of 64 tribes. ITMA was organized in 1990 to actively monitor and facilitate trust fund and asset management initiatives. To learn more please visit: <http://www.itmatrustfunds.org>.

A copy of ITMA's letter to Secretary Norton is available upon request.

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