

# SANTA YNEZ VALLEY CONCERNED CITIZENS

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## **U.S. Senate Indian Affairs Committee Hears Santa Ynez Valley's Concerns** *Musician and Valley resident David Crosby testifies at hearing*

WASHINGTON (May 18, 2005)—The U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs heard concerns today about the federal process that allows Indian tribes to acquire land and shield it from local and state laws. Musician David Crosby, a resident of California's Santa Ynez Valley, shared with senators his concerns about the local Chumash tribe's aggressive expansion in the rural area and the disregard of the tribe and U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs for the larger community.

"We are now in a situation where the laws intended to give Indians a break are doing unfair and unjust harm to communities all over the country," the singer/songwriter and social activist told the committee chaired by Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.).

The so-called fee-to-trust process, which allows tribes to annex land and remove it from local control, does "little to address the problems confronting Indian tribes and much to drive a wedge between local communities and their tribal neighbors," Crosby said in written testimony.

In today's information-gathering hearing, Chairman McCain displayed a keen interest in the Santa Ynez Valley's situation and indicated his support for legislative reforms that would give local communities more ways to participate in the fee-to-trust process.

"We're grateful that Sen. McCain and the Indian Affairs committee held this hearing, and hopeful it will lead to greater opportunities for local communities like ours to be heard," said Charles "C.J." Jackson, executive director of Santa Ynez Valley Concerned Citizens. "Our large, diverse coalition has been speaking up for a long time, and today's hearing is evidence we're being heard in Washington." The nonprofit coalition of residents, businesses and organizations will submit its own testimony to the Indian Affairs committee in the coming weeks.

Indian tribes routinely abuse the flawed federal process to evade environmental requirements, community land-use plans and state and local taxes, Crosby told the committee. At the same time, their developments, including casinos, place tremendous burdens on the surrounding communities. The actions, or inaction, of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has only exacerbated the plight of the Santa Ynez Valley, where the Chumash operate a casino that enriches the tribe by an estimated \$200 million a year. With gaming profits, the tribe is buying up off-reservation land and seeking to place it in federal trust for development.

In April, the Chumash filed an application to take 13 parcels of Valley land into trust. That request followed the BIA's granting of an application for about 7 acres, a decision being appealed by Concerned Citizens and other groups. Of great concern is a potential deal with actor-turned-winemaker Fess Parker to build hundreds of homes, a luxury hotel and golf course on 745 acres of ranchland currently zoned for a mere seven primary residences.

"We ask you, please," Crosby told the senators, "to look at this nationwide problem and try to find a fair and just way to let the tribes invest and grow—but not destroy surrounding communities in the process, as they are doing in Santa Ynez."

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### **Websites:**

Santa Ynez Valley Concerned Citizens  
[www.syvconcernedcitizens.com](http://www.syvconcernedcitizens.com)

Senate Indian Affairs Committee  
[Indian.senate.gov](http://Indian.senate.gov)

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