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Tribal Voices: Speech by Senator Albert Hale (Summary)

Albert Hale

Arizona State Legislature

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TRIBAL VOICES

Speech by Senator Albert Hale, Arizona State Legislature

This speech was given at the *New Mexico Tribal Leader Summit on Tobacco: Its Impacts on Health, Economics, Jurisdiction and Sovereignty* held on April 27, 2004 at the University of New Mexico School of Law. Senator Hale is one of the attorneys that filed a 1999 lawsuit against the tobacco companies on behalf of a number of Indian nations. The lawsuit requested compensation for injury to tribal members from smoking and chewing tobacco. Senator Hale served as the Navajo Nation President from 1995-1998. He also formerly held positions as the Associate Attorney General for the Navajo Nation, Special Counsel to the Navajo Nation Counsel, and President of the Navajo Nation Bar Association.

The New Mexico Tribal Leader Summit on Tobacco was co-sponsored by the Tribal Tobacco Health Education & Outreach Project, the All Indian Pueblo Council, the Eight Northern Indian Pueblos, Inc., HCP Commercial Tobacco Use Prevention and Control, the American Indian Law Center, the Southwest Indian Law Clinic, and the University of New Mexico School of Law Tribal Law Journal. The summit included presentations on how the tobacco settlement, commercial tobacco, tobacco control, and tobacco related health costs have impacted Indian tribes. The summit also included a panel discussion on Tobacco for Profit: Are There Compromises?

Segment #1: In this segment, Senator Hale discusses the Master Settlement Agreement with the Attorney General and the tobacco manufacturers. He also briefly discusses the requirements of the manufacturers as part of the settlement, including the establishment of the National Public Education Fund, restrictions on brand name sponsorships, and restrictions on advertisements.

Segment #2: In this segment, Senator Hale discusses how Indian nations were expressly excluded from the Master Settlement Agreement. Senator Hale explains that Indian nations do not receive any of the settlement funds for medical treatment of smoking and tobacco products for Indian people.

Segment #3: In this segment, Senator Hale explains that the claims made by the Indian nations have been dismissed. The reason given for dismissal is that because States have expended their own money to pay for healthcare costs resulting from smoking and tobacco use and because healthcare is provided by the federal government, Indian Nations have not suffered monetary damage.

Segment #4: In this segment, Senator Hale speaks about Indian sovereignty and urges tribal leaders to be proactive instead of reactive to issues affecting Indian people.