

I voted Yes on H.R. 2938, the Gila Bend Indian Reservation Lands Replacement Clarification Act.

This bill would prohibit the building of a casino on Gila Bend Indian Reservation lands and seeks to uphold the existing system of Indian gaming in Arizona.

In 1986, Congress conveyed land to the Tohono O'odham Nation in Arizona to replace farm land the Nation was no longer able to use due to flooding from federal dam projects. In January 2009, the Nation asked the federal government to take a parcel of these lands in Glendale (near Phoenix and over 100 miles away from the Nation's headquarters) into trust status and declare it eligible for gaming activities. The government issued a opinion stating that Interior has the authority to take the land into trust, but several Arizona tribes and the city of Glendale and challenged the opinion which is currently being debated in court.

New gaming in the Phoenix area is highly controversial because in 2000, the Indian tribes of Arizona asked the State and voters to support their efforts to conduct new gaming. Arizona voters did approve a referendum supporting such gaming based on promises that there would be no additional casinos in the Phoenix metropolitan area – which the Tohono Nation is now trying to accomplish through the courts. This legislation to prevent new gaming in the Phoenix area is supported by the State, most Arizona members of Congress, local cities, and several other Indian tribes in Arizona.

The bill was approved by a vote of 343 – 78 – 2.