

West Bank Homeowners Association

P. O. Box 970 Blythe, California 92226

TEL: (760) 921-3339

email: westbank@cox.net

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PRESS RELEASE – Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) taking land away from non-Indian residents in order to expand their casino operations

The West Bank Homeowners Association represents 400 families who own homes along a 17-mile strip of land beside the Colorado River in California. The U.S. Supreme Court has consistently recognized this area as disputed. Yet, the Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) are attempting to remove all residents to eliminate challenges to the trust patent process which they hope will allow them to build a new casino in California. The dispute began when the Department of the Interior (DoI) attempted to annex this strip of land to the reservation in 1969. Although the courts have agreed with California that the reservation boundary is riparian and therefore the disputed area outside the reservation, the DoI refuses to acknowledge the Judicial Branch of the federal government or the State of California. The legislative branch of the federal government refuses to get involved even though it is their responsibility to determine Indian reservation boundaries. Meanwhile the residents are forced to fight it out with the Indians, resisting tribal court evictions, confiscation of homes and private property, destruction of homes and private property, deprivation of basic civil rights, and assault by tribal police.

About 200 of our residents will be at the Riverside Courthouse for a press conference on June 16, 2011, to expose this injustice and present our plight to the public. We intend to reveal the antics of CRIT in their attempts to establish jurisdiction through force, threats, intimidation, sovereign immunity, their own tribal court system, and deception. We will also explain how the Riverside County Sheriff is complicit in helping CRIT commit these illegal and unconstitutional acts, in spite of the Sheriff's obligation to protect residents in accordance with Public Law PL-280.

In addition to direct and indirect participation in the many legal battles over jurisdiction in the disputed area, the West Bank Homeowners Association has attempted to resolve issues with CRIT directly for 15 years. All requests to communication with CRIT have been rebuffed. The Tribes have instead chosen to push for the trust patent to circumvent any attempts by California to thwart their efforts to build and operate another casino.

Our Congressional representatives have been requested to assist with the problem that they themselves created. But instead of passing legislation to resolve the boundary dispute, they instead seem to enjoy sitting in their ivory towers and watching the residents yield their constitutional rights and effectively slaughtered in the arena by the Tribal court system.

The effect of the lucrative nature of Indian gaming poses significant hardship to those who live in close proximity of Indian Tribes, even if separated by state lines. For many generations our families have lived here. But now CRIT will shortly be forcing everyone to either give up their homes, or yield their constitutional rights to be subjects to the tyranny of a hostile Tribal Council. Elderly families on fixed income are being forced to pack their belongings and find somewhere else to live.

The Riverside County Sheriff must protect private property in accordance with our rights as American citizens. The United States Congress must finally do its job and resolve this dispute to stop the never ending saga of lawsuits and provide peace in this land.