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OFFICE OF REGULATORY AFFAIRS & COLLABORATIVE ACTION
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

What follows is our response to the proposed revisions to TITLE 25 – Indians PART 83 PROCEDURES FOR ESTABLISHING THAT AN AMERICAN INDIAN GROUP EXISTS AS A TRIBE as provided in a June letter to Tribal Leaders.

83.7.(c) Petitioner has maintained authority or influence over its members as an autonomous Indian group since 1934.....

This portion of the proposal does not take into consideration the peoples of the southeastern United States, specifically east of the Mississippi River. While the tribal governments were permanently and forcibly removed from the area, many individuals and families were able to avoid removal or return. These people were able to either pass as white or black and were treated as such by the populace. There were unable to later reclaim their identity as Native Americans as they would again be forcibly removed.

Due to prevailing laws and policies preventing ownership of property and many common freedoms to any other than white Americans, many Native American people kept their heritage secret from any but their own family, passing on ceremonies and traditions intact to the future generations and maintaining their presence in their cultural lands. Birth, marriage, and death records never indicated Native American blood due to the restrictive laws, and heritage was maintained only by family tradition and oral histories. As a more progressive society developed, these laws were deemed illegal and abolished and many people of Native American descent have chosen to reclaim their heritage and culture in recent years.

Native American descendants have chosen to join together as a people in communities, groups, and associations, based on culture and heritage, established on ceremony and tradition, and not based on political or governmental entities. These people, joined together in their cultural and historical lands, sharing their history and heritage, should be afforded the same opportunities to be identified and recognized as Native American tribes and/or groups

THANK YOU,
MICHAEL L. DUNN
PRESIDENT
NATIVE AMERICAN INTERTRIBAL ALLIANCE