

National Indian Child Welfare Association

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NICWA Pledges to Defend ICWA

(Portland, OR, June 10, 2015)—Although we are not surprised that today’s hearing in the California Court of Appeals was accompanied by another staged media event and invited media attention, it remains disappointing how this Choctaw child’s privacy continues to be violated. We must reiterate the child is with family, including biological siblings. Family reunification, whenever possible, is in the best interest of foster children. In this specific case, this child was never available to be adopted. It was never to be an option.

Cases like these provide absolute proof why we need this week’s historic Indian Child Welfare (ICWA) regulations. The problem is not ICWA; it is when individuals choose to disregard the law. Fortunately, the new regulations will go far to help state courts enforce the federal law with consistency and uniformity.

There is consensus in the field of child welfare that ICWA is “the gold standard” of child welfare law. As NICWA Executive Director Sarah Kastelic said just yesterday, “In establishing these regulations, the federal government joins the ICWA Defense Project, 18 non-Native child advocacy organizations, the American Bar Association, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, and legal scholars representing 15 law schools in acknowledging that ICWA must be strengthened, not weakened.”

We have faith that the California Court of Appeals will uphold federal law and will allow this child to remain with her sisters and family.

While we celebrate the historic nature of the new ICWA regulations, today’s well-resourced public relations events are a sober reminder that we must remain vigilant in defending ICWA. We remain steadfastly committed to engaging with our supporters to ensure those who wish to undo ICWA’s protections do not succeed.

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter to see our new #DefendICWA social media campaign.

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About the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA)

NICWA works to support the safety, health, and spiritual strength of Native children along the broad continuum of their lives. We promote building tribal capacity to prevent child abuse and neglect through positive systems change at the state, federal, and tribal level.

Our Vision: Every Indian child must have access to community-based, culturally appropriate services that help them grow up safe, healthy, and spiritually strong—free from abuse, neglect, sexual exploitation, and the damaging effects of substance abuse.

Our Mission: NICWA is dedicated to the well-being of American Indian and Alaska Native children and families.

To learn more about NICWA, visit www.nicwa.org