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## Letter from Senator Langer to James Murray Regarding US House Resolution 5566, February 25, 1956

William Langer

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Cross, Martin

Y P O C

February 25, 1956

Honorable James E. Murray  
Chairman  
Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs  
United States Senate  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Indian Claims Commission will expire April 10, 1958, and I understand that your Committee is now considering H. R. 5566 to extend the life of the Commission.

Standing Rock Indian Agency

I favor extension of the life of the Commission since it has not completed the assigned task of settling once and for all the claims of Indian Tribes. The Sisseton and Wahpeton Sioux are citizens of my State, as are the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewas. Together they number about 8,000 Indians. They have filed several claims founded upon original Indian title. Until these claims are finally disposed of, there is little prospect that our efforts to work out plans for rehabilitation and ultimate assimilation of these Indians may be accomplished.

I am advised that the Department of Justice has suggested that H. R. 5566 be modified to include language which would eliminate all claims based on original Indian title. In the 79th Congress I was a member of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs which considered the legislation which ultimately became the Indian Claims Commission Act. I understood then that the purpose of the Indian Claims Commission Act was to dispose of all Indian claims. One of the examples cited to us in the legislative materials was the claim of the Sisseton and Wahpeton Tribe of Sioux Indians of North Dakota--a claim based on original Indian title. If the language proposed by the Department of Justice becomes law, it would mean that the claims of the Indians of my State, with very minor exceptions, would be dismissed by the Indian Claims Commission as beyond its jurisdiction. The purpose of the Act would be defeated.

The Indians of my State are entitled to their day in Court. Their claims should be heard and determined so that they may know once and for all where they stand.

More than nine years has passed since the Indian Claims Commission Act became law. In that period, much work has been done and substantial

Honorable James E. Murray

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sums of tribal money have been spent in the preparation of the claims for trial. All this was in reliance on a law of the United States. It seems to me that the integrity and good name of the Government is involved here. We ought not deprive this American minority of the opportunity for a hearing.

I oppose any language which would impair or diminish the jurisdiction of the Indian Claims Commission, and I favor extension of the life of the Indian Claims Commission without amendment.

With kindest regards, I am

Sincerely,

WL:mh