

*Monticello, NY* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today hosted U.S. Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, Larry EchoHawk, for a series of discussions on potential off-reservation gaming operations in Sullivan County. The congressman facilitated meetings with both opponents and supporters of casinos, as well as a tour of potential gaming sites in the county. U.S. Senator Charles Schumer, as well as local officials, joined Hinchey at these meetings.

"I am honored that Assistant Secretary EchoHawk accepted my invitation to visit Sullivan County for a series of thoughtful discussions on the impact that off-reservation gaming could have in the county," Hinchey said.

Earlier this year, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar told Hinchey that he planned on making a review of off-reservation gaming a high priority once the Senate confirmed an Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. EchoHawk was confirmed for that position just one week later. The last Interior Secretary during the Bush administration, Dirk Kempthorne, opposed off-reservation gaming. Today's discussions will become an important component of this review by the Interior Department.

"This is a matter that requires close and careful scrutiny and I believe the Interior Department should look at this situation openly and objectively and come to a conclusion that is in the best interests of the people of Sullivan County and the surrounding region," Hinchey stated. "I am hopeful that today's comprehensive discussions help facilitate that process."