

SUBCHAPTER II—CONTRACTS WITH
INDIANS

§ 81. Contracts and agreements with Indian tribes

(a) Definitions

In this section:

(1) The term “Indian lands” means lands the title to which is held by the United States in trust for an Indian tribe or lands the title to which is held by an Indian tribe subject to a restriction by the United States against alienation.

(2) The term “Indian tribe” has the meaning given that term in section 5304(e) of this title.

(3) The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

(b) Approval

No agreement or contract with an Indian tribe that encumbers Indian lands for a period of 7 or more years shall be valid unless that agreement or contract bears the approval of the Secretary of the Interior or a designee of the Secretary.

(c) Exception

Subsection (b) shall not apply to any agreement or contract that the Secretary (or a designee of the Secretary) determines is not covered under that subsection.

(d) Unapproved agreements

The Secretary (or a designee of the Secretary) shall refuse to approve an agreement or contract that is covered under subsection (b) if the Secretary (or a designee of the Secretary) determines that the agreement or contract—

- (1) violates Federal law; or
- (2) does not include a provision that—
 - (A) provides for remedies in the case of a breach of the agreement or contract;
 - (B) references a tribal code, ordinance, or ruling of a court of competent jurisdiction that discloses the right of the Indian tribe to assert sovereign immunity as a defense in an action brought against the Indian tribe; or
 - (C) includes an express waiver of the right of the Indian tribe to assert sovereign immunity as a defense in an action brought against the Indian tribe (including a waiver that limits the nature of relief that may be provided or the jurisdiction of a court with respect to such an action).

(e) Regulations

Not later than 180 days after March 14, 2000, the Secretary shall issue regulations for identifying types of agreements or contracts that are not covered under subsection (b).

(f) Construction

Nothing in this section shall be construed to—

- (1) require the Secretary to approve a contract for legal services by an attorney;
- (2) amend or repeal the authority of the National Indian Gaming Commission under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (25 U.S.C. 2701 et seq.); or
- (3) alter or amend any ordinance, resolution, or charter of an Indian tribe that requires approval by the Secretary of any action by that Indian tribe.

(R.S. § 2103; Pub. L. 85-770, Aug. 27, 1958, 72 Stat. 927; Pub. L. 106-179, § 2, Mar. 14, 2000, 114 Stat. 46.)

Editorial Notes

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, referred to in subsec. (f)(2), is Pub. L. 100-497, Oct. 17, 1988, 102 Stat. 2467, which is classified principally to chapter 29 (§ 2701 et seq.) of this title. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 2701 of this title and Tables.

CODIFICATION

R.S. § 2103 derived from acts Mar. 3, 1871, ch. 120, § 3, 16 Stat. 570; May 21, 1872, ch. 177, §§ 1, 2, 17 Stat. 136.

AMENDMENTS

2000—Pub. L. 106-179 amended section generally, substituting present provisions for provisions which required agreements with Indian tribes or Indians to be in writing, to bear the approval of the Secretary, to contain the names of all parties in interest, to state the time and place of making, purpose, and contingencies, and to have a fixed time limit to run, and provisions which declared agreements made in violation of this section to be null and void and which authorized recovery of amounts in excess of approved amounts, with one half of recovered amounts to be paid into the Treasury.

1958—Par. Second. Pub. L. 85-770 struck out requirement that contracts with Indian tribes be executed before a judge of a court of record.

Par. Sixth. Pub. L. 85-770 struck out par. Sixth enumerating contractual elements to be certified to by the judge.

Executive Documents

TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS

For transfer of functions of other officers, employees, and agencies of Department of the Interior, with certain exceptions, to Secretary of the Interior, with power to delegate, see Reorg. Plan No. 3 of 1950, §§ 1, 2, eff. May 24, 1950, 15 F.R. 3174, 64 Stat. 1262, set out in the Appendix to Title 5, Government Organization and Employees.

§ 81a. Counsel for prosecution of claims against the United States; cancellation; revival

Any contracts or agreements approved prior to June 26, 1936, by the Secretary of the Interior between the authorities of any tribe, band, or group of Indians and their attorneys for the prosecution of claims against the United States, which provide that such contracts or agreements shall run for a period of years therein specified, and as long thereafter as may be required to complete the business therein provided for, or words of like import, or which provide that compensation for services rendered shall be on a quantum-meruit basis not to exceed a specified percentage, shall be deemed a sufficient compliance with section 81 of this title: *Provided, however,* That nothing herein contained shall limit the power of the Secretary of the Interior, after due notice and hearing and for proper cause shown, to cancel any such contract or agreement: *Provided further,* That the provisions of this section and section 81b of this title shall not be construed to revive any contract which has been terminated by lapse of time, operation of law, or by acts of the parties thereto.