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## For Immediate Release

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### BLACKWATER TRADING POST LAND TRANSFER ACT INTRODUCED IN UNITED STATES SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Sacaton, AZ - Yesterday, United States Senators Kelly and Sinema introduced S. 371, the Blackwater Trading Post Land Transfer Act into the Senate. This Senate legislation is identical to the House version of the bill introduced on January 25<sup>th</sup> by Congressman Tom O'Halleran.

The Blackwater Trading Post Land Transfer Act instructs the Secretary of the Interior to take the 55 acres where the historic Blackwater Trading Post was located into trust for the Gila River Indian Community. The lands are owned by the Community and bordered on three sides by the Reservation. Acquiring the lands in trust will allow the Community to conduct land use plans for the parcel and the surrounding lands. Identical legislation was introduced in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress and passed the House of Representatives, but stalled in the Senate.

The lands at question hold historical and cultural significance to the Community as the site of the Blackwater Trading Post that was established nearly 100 years ago. The Trading Post operated until 2010 when the family that had operated the Trading Post for roughly 60 years sold the lands to the Community. At that time, the Community recovered over 1,000 cultural items that had been traded for items at the Post and stored in the museum at the Post. These culturally significant items were later recovered and now reside within the Community's Huhugam Heritage Center.

**Governor Stephen Roe Lewis** applauded the introduction of the legislation, stating "The Gila River Indian Community is appreciative that our Senate and House delegation have prioritized introduction of the Blackwater Trading Post Land Transfer Act early in this Congress. This non-controversial legislation is important to the Community and to our members residing in District 1 of the Reservation. I look forward to working with Senator Kelly, Senator Sinema, and Congressman O'Halleran to make sure this legislation passes each chamber and is signed into law."

The House version of the bill, H.R. 478 was introduced on January 25, 2021, and referred to the Committee on Natural Resources. The Senate version, S. 371, was introduced on February 22, 2021, and referred to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

**Councilmembers Arzie Hogg and Joey Whitman**, from District 1 of the Community stated, "We look forward to swift passage of this legislation so we can work with our members in District 1 to determine the best use of this parcel that has been so significant to the Community's history and to our future."

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“The Gila River Indian Community values its historical and cultural connection to the Blackwater Trading Post. I believe the trading post and adjoining land should be placed under the care and management of the Gila River Indian Community. I want to thank Governor Roe Lewis for his leadership on this issue and will work with Republicans and Democrats to get this passed,” **Senator Kelly**.

“Our bipartisan bill helps ensure the federal government keeps its promises to tribal communities by bringing the Gila River Indian Community’s Blackwater Trading Post into trust. I’ll keep working with our Native American neighbors to ensure tribal sovereignty is respected and that we continue to expand jobs and educational opportunities for all Arizonans,” said **Senator Kyrsten Sinema**.

“I am honored to represent Arizona’s First Congressional District, which is home to twelve sovereign tribal nations,” said **Rep. O’Halleran**. “As Members of Congress, we have the great privilege of being able to restore tribal homelands. The Gila River Indian Community has every right to the Blackwater Trading Post parcel, and I’m humbled to be able to re-introduce legislation that builds upon the efforts of many in the Gila River Indian Community to acquire it.”

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*Gila River Indian Community, located on 372,000 acres in south-central Arizona and home to the indigenous people of O’Odham (Pima) and Pee Posh (Maricopa). The people are known for their farms, deep traditions, basket weaving and pottery. The Tribe is comprised of seven districts, the administrative offices and departments are located in Sacaton, and serve the people throughout these seven community districts. 100% of its profits from gaming and 17 other Enterprises are utilized by the community providing services and opportunities to achieve the highest quality of life.*

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