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Contact: Thom Wallace, 202.630.1094

## **Obama's District Court Nominee to Be Sole Native American on Federal Bench**

*National Congress of American Indians calls for swift confirmation of Assistant U.S. Attorney Arvo Mikkanen to Federal District Court Judgeship*

Washington, D.C. – The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) commends the Obama Administration's nomination of Assistant U.S. Attorney Arvo Mikkanen to the United States District Court for the Northern District of Oklahoma. NCAI, the nation's oldest and largest American Indian and Alaska Native organization, is calling on the Senate to move quickly to confirm the appointment and fill the federal district court vacancy.

"Assistant U.S. Attorney Mikkanen has served our country for many years as a federal prosecutor, and with his vast experience in both federal and tribal law, he is an excellent choice for the Federal District Court in Northern Oklahoma." said Jefferson Keel, President of NCAI, and Lt. Governor of the Chickasaw Nation in Oklahoma. "We urge the Senate to act swiftly to confirm Mr. Mikkanen's nomination and make the federal judiciary more representative of all citizens of this country, including Native Americans."

When confirmed, Arvo Mikkanen will be the only Native American serving on the federal bench, out of a total of 875 federal judgeships, and only the third Native American in history to secure a federal judgeship. The other two American Indians to serve on the federal judiciary were Frank Seay (now on senior status), nominated by President Jimmy Carter in 1979, and Billy Burrage, nominated by President Bill Clinton in 1994.

Mikkanen, who has been an Assistant US Attorney for the Western District of Oklahoma since 1994, is an enrolled member of the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, and has had a distinguished legal career. He served as a trial and appellate judge for Court of Indian Offenses and Court of Indian Appeals for the Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, Wichita, Caddo, Delaware, Fort Sill Apache, Ponca, Pawnee, Kaw, Otoe-Missouria, and Tonkawa Tribes from 1988 to 1994, and he served as Chief Justice of the Cheyenne-Arapaho Supreme Court from 1991 to 1994. He is a graduate of Dartmouth College and Yale Law School.

### ***About The National Congress of American Indians:***

*Founded in 1944, the National Congress of American Indians is the oldest, largest and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization in the country. NCAI advocates on behalf of tribal governments and communities, promoting strong tribal-federal government-to-government policies, and promoting a better understanding among the general public regarding American Indian and Alaska Native governments, people and rights. For more information visit [www.ncai.org](http://www.ncai.org)*