



For Immediate Release

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## **Alabama-Coushatta Tribe Praises Congressman Babin for Introducing Bill to Preserve Jobs at Naskila Gaming**

(Livingston, Texas -- February 14) - The Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas thanked U.S. Congressman Brian Babin (R-TX 36) for filing legislation that will help protect the 330 jobs at Naskila Gaming, the Tribe's electronic bingo entertainment facility located on its reservation near Livingston. The legislation introduced by Congressman Babin, HR 4985, clarifies that the Tribe is authorized to offer electronic bingo under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act ("IGRA"), the federal law that regulates Indian gaming throughout the United States.

Congressman Babin's legislation comes at a crucial moment for the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe because the state of Texas continues its efforts to shut down Naskila Gaming. In fact, on February 6, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas upheld the state's claim that a 1994 Fifth Circuit decision stands for the proposition that the Tribe is not included under IGRA. However, Judge Keith Giblin noted in his opinion that the Tribe is "bearing the brunt of a conflicting [federal] statutory scheme, the result of which is arguably undesirable to its interests, and, many would say, unjust."

Bingo is legal in the state of Texas and the Traditional Kickapoo Tribe of Texas has offered electronic bingo under IGRA since 1996 without objection from the state. "There is no justification for a federal regulatory system that allows one tribe to offer gaming and forbids another from doing so, but that is the situation we have in Texas today," said Jo Ann Battise, Tribal Chairperson for the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe.

"We are confident that Congress will act quickly to address the inconsistencies in how Indian tribes are treated regarding gaming. We are very grateful to have our Congressman taking the lead to enact legislation that will clarify this conflicting federal regulatory scheme and end the threat from the state once and for all," Battise added further.

"Naskila Gaming has been a blessing to our Tribe and to the 330 full time employees of Naskila, sixty percent of who are non-tribal members, who have good paying jobs with healthcare benefits. Naskila's annual payroll, including salaries and benefits, is \$16.8 million. We have been fighting to stay open and protect these jobs since the state first filed the suit against us and we will continue to fight this injustice. We have been overwhelmed by the patronage and support of Naskila Gaming from visitors throughout the state. It has emerged as a significant contributor to the Deep East Texas economy. We are grateful that Congressman Babin is working overtime to protect these Deep East Texas jobs and believe other members of the Texas Congressional delegation will join in this effort," Battise concluded.