Government Actions toward Native Americans

1763 English Royal Proclamation: Tribes accorded independent nation status; all lands wet of the Appalachian Mountains are Native American country; the royal government must approve all land purchases.

1778 Continental Congress: Reaffirms the old British policy as U.S. policy.

1787 Northwest Territory Ordinance: Opens the Midwest for settlement; declares the U.S. government responsible for Native American property, rights, and liberty.

1824 Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is created under the jurisdiction of the secretary of war.

1830 Indian Removal Act: Mandates all Indians must move west of the Mississippi River.

1830-1843 Except for Iroquois and Seminole, more than 100,000 eastern Native Americans are forcibly relocated westward. About 12,000 die on the “Trail of Tears.”

1850-1880 Most reservations are established, as forced segregation becomes the new Native American reality.

1871 Appropriations bill rider: Declares tribes no longer are independent nations; legislation, not negotiation, is to determine any new arrangements.

1887 Dawes Act: Reservations surveyed, divided in tracts, and allotted to individual tribal members; surplus land sold.

1898 Burke Act: Eliminates Native Americans’ right to lease their land, with the intent to force Native Americans to work the land themselves.

1924 Indian Citizenship act: Grants U.S. citizenship to Native Americans.

1934 Indian Reorganization Act: Ends allotment; encourages tribal self-government; restores freedom of religion; extends financial credit; promotes the revival of Native American culture and crafts.

1952 Relocation Program: Moves Native Americans at government expense to urban areas for better job opportunities.

1953 Termination Act: Authorizes elimination of reservation systems, with an immediate end to federal services and tax immunity.

1973 Menominee Restoration Act: Revokes termination and restores the Menominee’s reservation and tribal status.

1974 Indian Finance Act: Facilitates financing of Native American enterprises and development projects through grants and loans.

1975 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act: Expands tribal control over reservation programs; provides funding for new public schools on or near reservations.

1976 Indian Health Care Improvement Act: Provides funds to build or renovate hospitals, add more personnel, and give scholarships to Native Americans to enter Indian Health Service.

1978 Education Amendments Act: Give substantial control over education programs to local Native American community.

1978 Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act: Provides grants to tribal community colleges.

1978 Indian Child Welfare Act: Restricts placement of Native American children by non-Native American homes.

1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act: Protects religious rights of Native Americans, including their use of peyote.

1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act: Restores standards of review for American Indian Religious Freedom Act that were overturned by a Supreme Court ruling in 1990.

1993 Omnibus Indian Advancement Act: Establishes foundation for gifts to BIA schools; increase economic development opportunities for tribes; improves tribal governance