

on Secretary Babbitt and the White House,” but Eckstein’s letter noted that “absent extreme political pressure,” (emphasis in original) a reversal would not be likely.<sup>483</sup>

Eckstein also spoke again with the Secretary, on Aug. 1. According to Eckstein, at the behest of Havenick or Goff he asked Babbitt whether the Department would approve an application to conduct Class II gaming at the Hudson site. Eckstein reported that Babbitt’s response was: “if there’s local opposition, I’m not going to approve it.” Babbitt has no recollection of such a conversation. Records show the call lasted seven minutes, during which Eckstein recalls no further discussion of the matter, or of the prior contact between the two friends on July 14. Since that date, they have not spoken about this matter, or any other.

The Four Feathers group also tried more formal appeals to the Secretary. The Mole Lake tribe hired its own counsel, lobbyist Ronald Platt and attorney Jon van Horne of McDermott, Will & Emery. Platt promptly drafted a detailed letter to Secretary Babbitt rebutting the reasoning of the July 14 denial letter. The 10-page letter, dated Aug. 4, 1995, explained why DOI’s reliance on community opposition, the opposition of nearby tribes, environmental concerns and secretarial discretion were each inappropriate. After noting that DOI has broad

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<sup>483</sup>The legal memo was prepared by a Brown & Bain associate, and reviewed by Eckstein and a second Brown & Bain partner. Eckstein met with those two attorneys to discuss the assignment on Monday, July 17. Though Eckstein and the partner cannot now recall the specific content of that discussion, the former associate (who is now a White House employee) recalls Eckstein’s informing the two colleagues that he had met with Babbitt after learning of the imminent decision and reminded the Secretary that he had promised Eckstein that no adverse decision would issue until Eckstein’s clients had the opportunity to meet with Babbitt. The lawyer recalled Eckstein’s recounting that Babbitt replied with words to the effect of “I can’t do that, Harold Ickes wants a decision today.” OIC Interview of Charles Blanchard, Aug. 6, 1999, at 2. The lawyer understood this statement to indicate that Ickes was compelling the timing of the decision. The lawyer had no recollection, however, of any remark concerning political contributions by Indians. He said that he and Eckstein discussed “political interference” as an issue in the assignment, and he may have looked into that area. *Id.*