NEWS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 11, 2003

Contact: Carrie Moore 202-208-4866

SENATE CONFIRMS ROSS O. SWIMMER TO BE SPECIAL TRUSTEE FOR AMERICAN INDIANS

The U.S. Senate on Thursday evening confirmed the nomination of Ross O. Swimmer to be Special Trustee for American Indians by a vote of 72-24. After Interior Secretary Gale A. Norton administers the oath of office, Swimmer will be the first American Indian, and the third Special Trustee, to hold the position since the office was established by Congress in the American Indian Trust Fund Management Reform Act of 1994.

"I applaud the strong, bipartisan support the Senate has demonstrated by this vote for Ross Swimmer and am confident that he is the leader this Department needs to direct and manage the Indian trust reform efforts currently underway and planned in the future." Norton stated. "Indian and tribal beneficiaries will reap the benefits from his previous experience both in service to Indian country and within the Department."

Swimmer particularly praised Senator Don Nickles of Oklahoma for his support throughout the confirmation process. "I appreciate the confidence the President and the Senate have shown in my nomination. I take the responsibilities of this position seriously and intend to work diligently to represent the interests of tribal and individual Indian beneficiaries for whom the government holds trust assets."

"I respect the work of the two previous Special Trustees and believe they have provided a strong foundation for trust reform. I look forward to working closely with Secretary Norton and the senior leadership of this Department who have demonstrated an unprecedented priority and commitment to improving the management of the Department's fiduciary responsibilities."

Swimmer was nominated for the position in January by President Bush and appeared before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on February 12, 2003. Swimmer brings experience both as an Interior official and tribal chief to this post. He served as Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs from 1985-1989, and has been the Director of the Office of Indian Trust Transition (OITT) and responsible for reforming Interior's organizational structure to improve the management of its fiduciary trust assets since 2001. "This vote clearly demonstrates Congress' support of the direction trust reform has taken under his leadership," stated an Interior Official.

Swimmer, a member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, also served as principal chief, and was elected to three successive terms. With his roots in Oklahoma, Swimmer attended Oklahoma University, where he received both his Bachelor of Arts and Juris Doctor degrees. The Special Trustee is responsible for the proper and efficient discharge of the Secretary's responsibilities for the management of Indian fiduciary trust assets.

-DOI-