

Media Contact:
Shawn Pensoneau
(202) 538-5156
Shawn.Pensoneau@nigc.gov



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Departure of NIGC Vice Chair Jeannie Hovland

WASHINGTON, D.C., April 6, 2026 – The National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) today announced the departure of Vice Chair Jean C. Hovland, effective immediately.

Hovland, a member of the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, has served as Vice Chair since 2021 and helped lead the agency’s oversight of more than 500 Indian gaming operations, working alongside fellow commissioners to uphold the integrity of a nearly \$44B Indian gaming industry through regulatory oversight efforts under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act.

“This was not an easy decision, but after much prayer and consideration, I have determined that it is time to return home to South Dakota,” said Hovland. “It’s been an honor to serve for over two decades in federal service, with eight of those years in Washington, D.C. I cannot think of a better agency to conclude my federal career with than the National Indian Gaming Commission.”

Over five years with NIGC, Hovland has been an advocate for protecting tribal sovereignty, promoting essential pathways to develop the next generation of gaming leaders, and, importantly, elevating awareness and securing federal resources to combat human trafficking and other threats to tribal communities.

“I am inspired daily by the knowledge, expertise, and passion of the NIGC Team in upholding the agency's mission and supporting the integrity of Tribal Gaming. It has been a privilege to travel to Tribal Nations, meet with Tribal leaders and gaming regulators, and witness firsthand the resilience and positive impacts of tribal gaming,” Hovland said.

“Vice Chair Hovland’s steadfast commitment has had a lasting and meaningful impact on the Agency and Indian Country,” said Chief of Staff Dustin Thomas. “Her commitment to strengthening tribal sovereignty, advancing regulatory excellence, and supporting the well-being of tribal communities reflects the very best of public service. We are deeply grateful for her contributions and wish her continued success as she returns home to South Dakota.”

Prior to her service with the Commission, Hovland held several senior federal leadership roles, including Commissioner of the Administration for Native Americans, where she oversaw social and economic development programs for Native communities. She also served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Native American Affairs at the Administration for Children and Families within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Hovland’s deep commitment to Indian Country is rooted in her years of service in South Dakota, where she was U.S. Senator John Thune’s tribal affairs advisor for nearly 13 years.

The Agency will provide additional details on the leadership succession when available. Sharon Avery remains as Associate Commissioner.

###

The National Indian Gaming Commission’s mission is to support tribal self-sufficiency and the integrity of Indian gaming through effective regulation. Together with tribes and states, the NIGC regulates more than 500 gaming establishments operated by nearly 250 tribes across 29 states. To learn more, visit www.nigc.gov and follow us on [Facebook](#), [X \(Twitter\)](#), and [LinkedIn](#).