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Press Release

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DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR DETERMINES CHIPPEWA CREE CHAIRMAN MADE PROTECTED WHISTLEBLOWER DISCLOSURES AND THAT THE CHIPPEWA CREE TRIBE SUBJECTED HIM TO PROHIBITED REPRISALS

Rocky Boy, Montana (Dec 23, 2014) - Chairman Ken Blatt St. Marks of the Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Reservation received federal whistleblower status under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 Section 1553(a). Hillary Tompkins, Solicitor for the Department of the Interior, determined there was a sufficient basis to conclude that the Chippewa Cree Tribe had subjected St. Marks to unlawful reprisals after St. Marks reported widespread corruption within the Chippewa Cree Tribe.

St. Marks was elected to serve as the Chairman of the Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation in 2012. Once elected, St. Marks requested reports of the Tribe's income and expenditures in an attempt to bring transparency to tribal government operations. Though he was given some information, he was denied access to certain records needed to verify the financial reports. In particular, St. Marks was concerned over the financial records relating to the Bureau of Reclamation North Central Montana Regional Water System Project. In attempting to reconcile the financial information he was given about the project with the Project's bank account, Chairman St. Marks learned that funds were missing from the accounts. Unable to get an adequate explanation of the missing funds from the Tribe's Business Committee members and staff, he continued to investigate. He later followed up with an open letter to the Tribe's membership announcing his cooperation with federal agencies investigating the misuse of Reinvestment Act funds, as well as non-Reinvestment Act funds. He also requested whistleblower protection from the U.S. Attorney's Office, who forwarded that request to the Office of Inspector General.

The investigation unearthed widespread corruption within the Tribe and led to several federal indictments and convictions. Because of his whistleblowing activities, however, St. Marks became subject to innumerable personal, professional, and business attacks. St. Marks was removed as Chairman, briefly jailed by the Tribe, and individually prohibited him from running for office. St. Marks then spent the next several years litigating in different courts so that he could run for office, serve as the elected Chairman, and maintain his personal freedom.

If a person believes they have been subjected to a reprisal prohibited by the Section 1553(a) of the the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 allows persons who have been subject to whistleblowing reprisals, such person may submit a complaint to The Office of the Inspector General of the relevant agency, who is then required to "determine whether there is sufficient basis to conclude that the non-Federal employer has subjected the complainant to a reprisal [that is]

prohibited.” On December 19, 2014, Solicitor Hillary Tompkins determined St. Marks had indeed been the target of prohibited reprisals by the Tribe as a result of his actions.

Responding to the news about the whistleblower determination, Chairman St. Marks noted how hard things had been.

In my wildest dreams I wouldn't have imagined that serving as the Tribe's Chairman and attempting to discern what happened to the Tribe's finances, would have led me down such a winding road. It sure seemed like my civil rights were gone and no remedy in sight. My wife encouraged me to have faith, though. Now that we've seen many of the corrupt jailed, I believe the house of cards these corrupt officials built has fallen.

Fredericks Peebles & Morgan was fortunate enough to work with Chairman St. Marks on his whistleblower status as well as 10 or so cases connected to the reprisal.

For more information on the contents of this press release, please contact Martha L. King at: (303) 673-9600.

ABOUT FREDERICKS PEEBLES & MORGAN LLP

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