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Controller, Counties and Tribes Work Together To Distribute Local Funds

Sacramento – On Wednesday, May 5th, State Controller Steve Westly co-hosted a workshop to help local governments claim funding from the Indian Gaming Special Distribution fund to mitigate the impacts of gaming on local governments, as prescribed by Senate Bill 621.

Assemblymember Jerome E. Horton, Chair of the Assembly Governmental Organization Committee and co-author of the bill, and the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) partnered with the Controller's Office on the workshop.

"There is \$25 million at stake for local governments, but there is a steep learning curve because we've never had this fund before," Westly said. "I'm encouraged that the parties involved are working together to streamline the process and help local governments collect this money."

Nearly 20 of the 25 counties receiving monies participated in the workshop. During the workshop, the State Controller's Office provided an overview of the distribution of the Special Distribution Funds to counties. San Diego and Riverside Counties provided examples of their experience in creating the Local Community Benefit Committee and the development of their programs as required. Tribal representatives also attended and participated in a roundtable discussion regarding SB 621 implementation.

"It is extremely important that local governments receive this money to mitigate the impacts of tribal gaming," said Horton. "I am excited by the fact that the counties and gaming tribes are working closely to solve this complicated issue."

In order to receive funding, counties must establish a complex claiming system by June 30, 2004. The Indian Gaming Special Distribution Fund, established for the receipt and deposit of gaming license fees received from tribes pursuant to the terms of the tribal-state compacts. To distribute funding, a county must create an Indian Gaming Local Community Benefit Committee consisting of the county, affected cities and tribal members. This committee will evaluate claims and will forward a list of approved projects to the State Controller's Office for payment from the established tribal accounts.

"CSAC appreciates very much the partnership this workshop demonstrated between state and local governments in an effort to ensure these monies are put to good use throughout California's communities," said Paul Stein, CSAC President and Calaveras County Supervisor. "The success of this mitigation program will take the joint efforts of cities, counties and tribal governments and their ability to work together."