

Legislation would approve tribal water rights

(KAIR)--A step forward in the Kickapoo Tribe's long running goal to achieve water rights.

That comes as two Kansas Republicans, United States Senator Jerry Moran and Congressman Steve Watkins, Tuesday introduced the Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas Water Rights Settlement Agreement.

Moran is a member of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

According to a news release from Moran's office, the Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas, since 1972, has worked to achieve water security for its livelihood and that of its members. After a decade of negotiations between the tribe, state, and federal entities, the state and tribe reached a settlement in September 2016, determining the various elements of the Tribal Water Right.

The legislation approves the tribe's water right, establishes the administration of the right by the state as the senior water right in the Delaware River basin, and provides no funding for future water storage projects. Federal law requires such settlements involving tribes to be affirmed by Congress.

In the release, Moran called the legislation "a local solution to a local natural resource matter that Congress ought to approve" in order to provide the Kickapoo Tribe with "vital water security for its reservation and residents."

Watkins, in the release, said the Tribe deserves water security and that he is committed to work on the issue in both Chambers of Congress.

Kickapoo Tribal Chairman Lester Randall, in a statement to MSC News, said the Tribe appreciates the leadership of Moran and Watkins for the legislation, and looks forward to working with the pair toward passage of what he calls "extremely important legislation."

The Tribal reservation is located in Brown County.

The Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas appreciates the leadership of Senator Jerry Moran and Congressman Steve Watkins in Re-introducing legislation to approve the Kickapoo tribal Water Settlement Agreement. The Tribe looks forward to continuing to work with both Senator Moran's Office and Congressman Watkin's office toward passage of this extremely important legislation. -Statement from Kickapoo Tribal Chairman Lester Randall

