Remarks by Chief Lynn Malerba at Swearing in Ceremony for United States Treasurer

September 12, 2022

As Delivered

Kutapatotamawush (thank you) Secretary Yellen for your very kind remarks. I thank you for your faith in me. What the Secretary neglected to say was that she is the first woman to serve as the Secretary of Treasury and this is the first time two women are signing the currency. Now that is something to celebrate!

On every step on the trail of life, I have been blessed with people who have believed in me and encouraged me. It is only for that fact that I am here today. My parents, siblings, husband, children, sons in law, grandchildren, colleagues, my dear friends, my Mohegan tribal leaders and Mohegan family are those people. They are and will always be my enduring motivation. No one achieves their goals without people who stand by your side and trust in your vision. Any success is much sweeter because of them.

I am emotional about signing this currency because I used my maiden name as part of my signature, which is Roberge and that is my middle name. My parents raised seven children with so much love but a lot of financial hardship, and they struggled so greatly to provide for us but they did an amazing job. Imagine, now their name is on the currency when they found it so difficult to have any in their lifetime and so they are with me today. The book I used has pictures of my parents in the book, and it’s my mother’s missal.

So, I now have my colleagues at every level of Treasury, the Treasury Tribal Advisory Committee and all Indian Country standing by my side and my success is much sweeter because of them. Together we will do great things. I would like to thank the Office of Recovery Programs, including Chief Recovery Officer Jacob Leibenluft and the dedicated Tribal team led by Fatima Abbas, for all their hard work and their creative vision in marshalling a historic investment into Indian Country over the past two years.

The Biden-Harris Administration has made a commitment not just to Indian Country but to all of America to improve our communities. It is a worthy goal to ensure that everyone in this
United States enjoys a stable income, stable housing, good schools, and ultimately a fair shot at life at creating some wealth for the next generation so that they don't struggle as perhaps the previous generation. This can only happen when all voices are heard and respected – and when policy reflects those voices.

We all know that, historically, many promises have not been kept to the indigenous peoples of this nation. But we can and will do better. My appointment is a promise kept. My appointment demonstrates respect for Tribal sovereignty and a clear understanding of the political relationship between the United States and our native nations.

And I’m proud to lead the Office of Tribal and Native Affairs. Tribal nations have long advocated to create this office – and the Biden Administration, Secretary Yellen is making history by doing so. We will build on the successes of these past two years to ensure that policy reflects native voices and native communities. We know that one size does not fit all. We know that when tribal leaders determine their priorities in concert with their communities, we serve our people properly with respect for our cultural traditions. We know that when barriers to economic development are eliminated, tribal communities will thrive and prosper. We know, when there is tribal economic development, our local and state communities prosper as well.

Tribal economic development is not reductive. It is additive – with cascading economic effects through direct employment, indirect employment through the goods and services purchased from local businesses, state and local taxes paid by those employees, discretionary dollars spent in the local community, mutual aid agreements, and more.

The same is true of robust economic development in other underserved communities.

It is such an honor to assume this office. When I was sworn in as Chief of the Mohegan Tribe, I noted that “we walk in the footsteps of our ancestors on the trail of life, and we must leave footprints on the path for those who come after us so that they may find their way easily.” I now hope to help all the next generations of this United States find their way easily with respect for their ancestors and the unique cultures they all represent.

Katantuoot, wuyunomsh United States qa wuyunomsh kiyawin (God bless these United States and bless us all).

Katapatotamawush (Thank you).

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