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President Obama Nominates Dean Washburn to Lead Indian Affairs

President Barack Obama on Thursday nominated Dean [Kevin K. Washburn](#) of the University of New Mexico School of Law to become the next Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, the highest position in the federal government that focuses primarily on Indian Affairs. Washburn must now be confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

In announcing the nomination, President Obama noted that Washburn, a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma, has demonstrated knowledge and dedication throughout his career.

Washburn joined the UNM School of Law faculty as dean in 2009. He began his academic career at the University of Minnesota Law School, where he built a reputation as an expert in Indian law, especially in Indian gaming. Through his writings and testimony, he has influenced public policy in both criminal law in Indian country and gaming.

He came to the UNM School of Law from the University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law, where he was the Rosenstiel Distinguished Professor of Law. He also spent a year as the Visiting Oneida Nation Professor at Harvard Law School.

Prior to entering academia, he was a federal prosecutor in New Mexico, serving in the Violent Crimes Section of the U.S. Attorney's Office. He was a trial attorney with the U.S. Justice Department and later served as general counsel of the National Indian Gaming Commission, an independent federal regulatory agency in Washington, D.C.

“As a member of the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma, it is an incredible honor and a great responsibility to be asked to serve in this role,” said Washburn.

Indian Affairs is the oldest bureau in the Department of the Interior. It was established in 1824 and provides services to about 1.9 million Native Americans and Alaska Natives.

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