National Congress of American Indians
1516 P Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

March 11, 2013

The Honorable Doc Hastings, Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Edward J. Markey, Ranking
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives

Re: Opposition to H.R. 687, Southeast Arizona Land Exchange

Dear Chairman Hastings and Ranking Member Markey:

On behalf of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), I write to express our strong opposition to H.R. 687, the Southeast Arizona Land Exchange and Conservation Act. The legislation would allow foreign-owned mining conglomerates, Rio Tinto PLC (United Kingdom) and BHP Billiton Ltd (Australia) through their subsidiary Resolution Copper Company, to acquire over 2,400 acres of public lands (including the 760-acre Oak Flat Withdrawal Area) within the Tonto National Forest in Arizona to develop and operate an unprecedented deep underground copper mining project in the Oak Flat area.

The Oak Flat area has significant cultural, historical, religious, and environmental significance to Apaches, Yavapais, and other Native Americans and qualifies as a Traditional Cultural Property under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The block and cave mining that would take place on the land proposed for conveyance would cause irreparable damage to the archeological and cultural resources of the area as well as highly damaging consequences to the water, wildlife, plants, and other natural resources in the area. Heightening our concerns, the federal government has not performed an environmental or cultural impact analysis that would allow Congress to fully understand the project <u>before</u> taking any action to convey federal land to Resolution Copper for mining.

<u>For these reasons, we urge you to oppose this legislation</u>. We appreciate your efforts to protect this special place. Please contact me if you have any questions about this matter.

Sincerely,

Jefferson Keel
President, NCAI