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[Fischer Introduces Bill to Return Improperly Seized Army Corps of Engineers Land Back to Nebraska's Winnebago Tribe](#)

WASHINGTON, D.C. – This week, U.S. Senator Deb Fischer (R-Neb.) led the introduction of the Winnebago Land Transfer Act. The legislation would transfer approximately 1,600 acres of land back to the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska that were illegally seized in the 1970s by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for a proposed recreation project that was never started.

In addition to Senator Fischer, the legislation is cosponsored by U.S. Senators Pete Ricketts (R-Neb.), Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), and Joni Ernst (R-Iowa).

“The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was wrong to seize this land through eminent domain in the 1970s. After decades of inaction, it’s time for us to make this right. My legislation will return this land to the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, and I look forward to getting this bill to the President’s desk,” said Senator Fischer.

“The Army Corps of Engineers’ decision to condemn and seize land from the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska was a classic case of government overreach. My colleagues in the Nebraska and Iowa delegations and I want to see this wrong corrected, and the land returned to the Winnebago people,” said Senator Ricketts.

“The introduction of the Winnebago Land Transfer Act by Senators Fischer, Ricketts, Grassley, and Ernst is a historic and beautiful moment for the Winnebago people. We have been waiting for this wrong to be made right, and we are grateful for the leadership demonstrated by our congressional delegation. We look forward to the passage of this important legislation,” said Winnebago Tribal Chairwoman Victoria Kitcheyan.

[Click here](#) to read the text of the bill.

Background:

The Treaty of 1865 established the Winnebago Reservation in northeastern Nebraska along the Missouri River. Due to westward shifts in the river, portions of the reservation are now in Iowa.

In 1970, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) was performing stabilization efforts on the Missouri River’s banks and condemned land on both the Nebraska and Iowa sides of the river for a proposed recreation project. The condemned land included tracts of reservation land in Iowa. The Corps filed eminent domain proceedings to acquire the land, triggering years of legal challenges.

Ultimately, the Nebraska tract of land was returned to the Tribe. However, both tracts of land in Iowa that were illegally taken remain under the Corps’ jurisdiction today and are maintained by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Neither the Iowa DNR nor the Corps has objection to the Tribe regaining control of the land. The latest renewal agreement of the license between the Iowa DNR and the Corps includes a provision that anticipates the return of the land to the Tribe.

Senator Fischer's Winnebago Land Transfer Act would transfer administrative jurisdiction of the approximately 1,600 acres from the Army Corps of Engineers to the Bureau of Indian Affairs to hold in trust for the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska.

U.S. Representative Randy Feenstra (R-Iowa) [introduced](#) the House version of this legislation in February. In addition to Congressman Feenstra, the legislation is cosponsored by U.S. Representatives Mike Flood (R-Neb.), Adrian Smith (R-Neb.), Don Bacon (R-Neb.), Zachary Nunn (R-Iowa), Sharice Davids (D-Kan.), Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-Iowa), and Ashley Hinson (R-Iowa).

Permalink: <https://www.fischer.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2023/11/fischer-introduces-bill-to-return-improperly-seized-army-corps-of-engineers-land-back-to-nebraska-s-winnebago-tribe>