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**Congress of the United States**

**House of Representatives**

2333 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515-3223

(202) 225-4611

<http://www.house.gov/mchugh/>

January 20, 2004

**DISTRICT OFFICES**

HSBC BANK BUILDING  
120 WASHINGTON STREET, SUITE 200  
WATERTOWN, NY 13601-2576  
(315) 782-3150

104 FEDERAL BUILDING  
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205 SOUTH PETERBORO STREET  
CANASTOTA, NY 13032-1312  
(315) 897-2063

Mr. Ray Halbritter  
Nation Representative  
Oneida Indian Nation  
5218 Patrick Road  
Verona, New York 13478

Dear Mr. Halbritter:

I was enormously disappointed with reports I have read about the Nation withholding Silver Covenant payments to the Stockbridge Valley Central School. From the information available to me, the dispute appears to be personnel related, which, as you well know, must be handled in accordance with federal and state laws and regulations.

During my visit to the Oneida Reservation in December 2002, the tribal members spoke in understandably proud terms of the administration of the Silver Covenant grants, which were described at that time as being allocated in a dispassionate manner as a means to express support for local taxing jurisdictions. From what I have read, however, it now appears that the grants have somehow evolved into a political tool, which is highly unfortunate. It seems to me the entire situation calls into question the intentions of this system and diminishes the goodwill that has been built over the years by the Nation's payment of these funds.

I hope that you will take the time to review your decision in this matter.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

John M. McHugh  
Member of Congress

JMM/jmb