

MR. THOMAS: Thank you, Ross. Good morning everyone, first of all. My name is Spencer Thomas. I'm from the Gila River Indian Community or the Gila River, as it's better known. I'm a tribal member at that reservation. I also have done other things, but I will not go into them. I'm currently also the president of Southwest Indian Agricultural Association and a board member of IAC. And basically my comments will be my own, and none of the other organizations are involved, but I know they do coincide. First of all, it is very disheartening and disappointing to hear some of the cuts that are coming down.

We continually have fought at Gila River, and I know other tribes have done this, to not only the EIRP program, but other programs to be funded at 100 percent level. And it seems that every time we do that, every time we send people to testify, every time we talk about it, it falls on deaf ears. When do they start listening? When do they actually take notice? It seems never. Every year they tell us, "Yeah, we are going to do this. We're going to do that." Do they do it? No. They just cut. Where is all of our money going?

Take a look at the news around you. It seems it's going to third world countries, and yet we have third world conditions here in our own backyards. When are we going to wake up? When are we going to say, "enough is enough?" We need it here too. The gentleman who said we're the first members here in this land, yes, we are native Americans. Our ancestors were here since time immemorial. We are their descendants. We are the ones that were here first, and yet look where we are at today, fighting for what is rightfully ours, fighting for every dollar that is spent on Indian reservations or Indian communities.

That cannot be the right way to do things. Other countries take care of their backyards before they assist anyone else. So I urge each and everyone of you to look at these programs and make your voice heard and state emphatically that it is time to take care of our first people. Our elders fought, remember, for all this. They gave up a lot of things for us to be here today. And in honor of them, we need to keep that fight going. So, again, I urge each and every one of you to make a statement and say, "Stop time and let us get back and take care of our needs here at home." Thank you.

MR. RACINE: Thank you, Spencer. Next.