

1 Linus Everling (SBN 019760)
2 Thomas L. Murphy (SBN 022953)
3 Gila River Indian Community
4 525 W. Gu u Ki
5 P.O. Box 97
6 Sacaton, Arizona 85147
7 (520) 562-9760
8 linus.everling@gric.nsn.us
9 thomas.murphy@gric.nsn.us

10 Donald R. Pongrace (pro hac vice
11 application pending) (D.C. Bar No. 445944)
12 Merrill C. Godfrey (pro hac vice
13 application pending) (D.C. Bar No. 464758)
14 Akin Gump Strauss Hauer &
15 Feld, LLP
16 1333 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W.
17 Washington, D.C. 20036-1564
18 (202) 887-4000
19 dpongrace@akingump.com
20 mgodfrey@akingump.com
21 *Counsel for Gila River Indian Community*

22 **IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**
23 **FOR THE DISTRICT OF ARIZONA**

24 A.D. and C. by CAROL COGHLAN
25 CARTER, their next friend, et al.,

26 Plaintiffs,

27 v.

28 KEVIN WASHBURN, in his official
29 capacity as Assistant Secretary –
30 Indian Affairs, et al.,

31 Defendants.

Case No. 2:15-cv-1259

**MOTION OF THE GILA RIVER
INDIAN COMMUNITY TO
INTERVENE AS DEFENDANT**

32 The Gila River Indian Community (the “Community”) moves pursuant to Fed. R.
33 Civ. P. 24 to intervene as a defendant. Lodged with this motion is a proposed Motion to
34 Dismiss. *See* Fed. R. Civ. P. 24(c).

1 The parties have stated their positions on this motion through counsel as follows:
2 defendants Kevin Washburn and Sally Jewell consent; defendant Gregory McKay takes
3 no position; the plaintiffs oppose.

4 **MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES**

5 The Community moves to intervene as of right, because pursuant to the Indian
6 Child Welfare Act (“ICWA”), 25 U.S.C. § 1901 *et seq.*, the Community “claims an
7 interest relating to the . . . transaction that is the subject of the action, and is so situated
8 that disposing of the action may as a practical matter impair or impede [the
9 Community’s] ability to protect its interest[s],” and no parties adequately represent the
10 Community’s interests. Fed. R. Civ. P. 24(a)(2). Alternatively, the Community moves for
11 permissive intervention under Fed. R. Civ. P. 24(b)(1)(B) because it “has a . . . defense
12 that shares with the main action a common question of law or fact.” Fed. R. Civ. P.
13 24(b)(1)(B).

14 **I. THE COMMUNITY MEETS THE STANDARD TO INTERVENE AS OF**
15 **RIGHT UNDER RULE 24(a)(2)**

16 Under Rule 24(a)(2), “the court must permit anyone to intervene” where four
17 requirements are met: (1) the motion to intervene is timely; (2) the movant “claims an
18 interest relating to the property or transaction that is the subject of the action”; (3)
19 disposition “of the action may as a practical matter impair or impede the movant’s ability
20 to protect its interest”; and (4) existing parties do not adequately represent the interest
21 claimed by the movant. Fed. R. Civ. P. 24(a)(2); *U.S. ex rel. McGough v. Covington*
22 *Technologies Co.*, 967 F.2d 1391, 1394 (9th Cir. 1992). “Generally, Rule 24(a)(2) is
23 construed broadly in favor of proposed intervenors and we are guided primarily by
24 practical considerations.” *McGough*, 967 F.2d at 1394 (citation omitted).

25 **A. The Motion is Timely**

26 Timeliness is evaluated by “(1) the stage of the proceeding at which an applicant
27 seeks to intervene; (2) the prejudice to other parties; and (3) the reason for and length of
28 the delay.” *Id.* Under this standard, the Community’s motion is timely. First, it was filed

1 at the initial stage of the proceeding, only two months after the plaintiffs filed the action,
2 and at the time set for a responsive pleading. Second, there is no prejudice to any party
3 because the Community is complying with the existing case deadlines by lodging a
4 proposed motion to dismiss with this motion to intervene. *See Day v. Apoliona*, 505 F.3d
5 963, 965 (9th Cir. 2007) (intervention allowed even on appeal, for purpose of filing a
6 petition for rehearing, where timing would not have been changed by an earlier
7 intervention). Third, the two-month delay in filing is a reasonable amount of time for the
8 Community to become aware of the action, identify and retain counsel, evaluate its
9 interests in the action, and prepare a motion to intervene and proposed motion to dismiss.
10 Further, the existing defendants have been granted this same amount of time to respond to
11 the complaint, and thus for the Community to take that same interval to prepare its own
12 proposed motion to dismiss is reasonable.

13 **B. The Community Claims an Interest in the Outcome of One of the Two**
14 **Child Custody Proceedings that Are the Subject of this Action**

15 The interest requirement of Rule 24(a)(2) is satisfied when the movant claims a
16 “significant protectable” interest, “meaning that (1) it asserts an interest that is protected
17 under some law, and (2) there is a relationship between its legally protected interest and
18 the plaintiff's claims.” *United States v. Aerojet Gen. Corp.*, 606 F.3d 1142, 1149 (9th Cir.
2010) (citations omitted).

19 First, the Community claims an interest in the outcome of A.D.’s child custody
20 proceedings. The Community is a party to the proceedings in state court that the
21 plaintiffs here seek to enjoin. This interest is expressly protected by, among other things,
22 the federal law at issue here, ICWA. ICWA defines “Indian child’s tribe,” in relevant
23 part, as “the Indian tribe in which an Indian child is a member or eligible for
24 membership.” 25 U.S.C. § 1903(5)(a). It is undisputed that baby girl A.D. “is eligible
25 for membership in, or is already an enrolled member of, the Gila River Indian
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1 Community.”¹ Compl. (Doc. 1) ¶ 9. It is therefore undisputed that under ICWA, A.D.’s
2 tribe is the Community. Moreover, in passing ICWA, “Congress was concerned not
3 solely about the interests of Indian children and families, but also about the impact on the
4 tribes themselves of the large numbers of Indian children adopted by non-Indians. The
5 numerous prerogatives accorded the tribes through the ICWA’s substantive
6 provisions must, accordingly, be seen as a means of protecting not only the interests of
7 individual Indian children and families, but also of the tribes themselves.” *Mississippi*
8 *Band of Choctaw Indians v. Holyfield*, 490 U.S. 30, 49 (1989) (citations omitted). These
9 provisions to protect the interests of tribes include, for example, the right for a tribe to
10 intervene and seek transfer to tribal court. *See* 25 U.S.C. § 1911(b), (c). More generally,
11 ICWA favors the child-tribe relationship that the Community seeks to preserve here by
12 ensuring that child custody proceedings give sufficient weight to A.D.’s membership in
13 the Community.

14 Second, the Community’s interests have an obvious relationship with plaintiffs’
15 claims, because, for example, the plaintiffs seek to have § 1911(b) declared
16 unconstitutional, destroying the Community’s federal right to seek transfer under that
17 provision. And again, more generally, the plaintiffs’ claims would eliminate
18 consideration of A.D.’s Community membership in the procedural and substantive
19 decisions regarding her custody.

20 **C. As a Practical Matter, Disposition of this Suit in Plaintiffs’ Favor**
21 **Would Prevent the Community from Protecting its Interests**

22 Even if the Community is not a party to this suit, its interests would be harmed by
23 the disposition of plaintiffs’ claims if plaintiffs were to obtain the relief they seek. As just
24 noted, if plaintiffs were to prevail here, the child custody proceedings in which the
25 Community asserts the importance of A.D.’s Community membership would be
26 prohibited from applying the provisions of ICWA requiring that priority be given to that

27 ¹ Baby A.D. is an enrolled Community member.
28

1 membership. They would also be prohibited from allowing the Community to seek
2 transfer to tribal court. As a practical matter, the Community can prevent those harms to
3 its claimed interests only by successfully intervening here and prevailing on its defenses.

4 **D. None of the Defendants Adequately Represent the Community's**
5 **Interests as a Federally Recognized Tribe**

6 Finally, the other defendants do not adequately represent the Community's specific
7 interests in this suit. The Community is a protected beneficiary of ICWA, and its
8 statutorily recognized sovereign interest as a federally recognized tribe in preserving its
9 relationship with baby A.D. to the fullest extent is not shared by any of the defendants.
10 The Court cannot adequately consider these interests of the Community without hearing
11 from the Community. First, it bears noting that ICWA was enacted in part to address
12 problems that arose out of the practices of state child welfare agencies. And although
13 Arizona follows ICWA and the Director of the Arizona Department of Child Safety has
14 an interest in defending the state laws implementing ICWA, he is charged with enforcing
15 a variety of state laws relating to child welfare in a neutral manner, and has no
16 particularized or personal interest in the placement of A.D. in manner that preserves her
17 tribal relationship. Defendant McKay in his official capacity as a state officer is not
18 necessarily well-placed or incentivized to argue all the ways in which ICWA benefits the
19 Community or to articulate the injuries to the tribal-child relationship that the Community
20 will suffer if A.D.'s custody proceedings do not adequately consider her Community
21 membership.

22 Second, while the federal officers who are defendants here also have an interest in
23 defending ICWA, they too are not well-placed to fully argue the tribal perspective and
24 have no particularized interest in a relationship with A.D. The Community is a protected
25 beneficiary of ICWA whose relationship with A.D. is at the core of this case. By contrast,
26 the federal officers are obligated rather than benefited by ICWA. They would lose
27 nothing personally if Plaintiffs were to prevail, while the Community would lose the
28 ability to protect vital ties to A.D. and other Community children like her.

1 In sum, the Community's interests in its relationship with baby girl A.D., in her
2 custody determination, and in the constitutionality of its rights under ICWA are "similar
3 to, but not identical with" the other defendants' interests here. 7C Charles Alan Wright &
4 Arthur R. Miller, *Federal Practice and Procedure* § 1909 (3d ed. 1998). Accordingly,
5 intervention under Rule 24(a)(2) must be granted, because it is not "clear that the
6 [defendants] will provide adequate representation for" the Community's distinct tribal
7 interests. *Id.*; see also *California ex rel. Lockyer v. United States*, 450 F.3d 436, 444 (9th
8 Cir. 2006). Under a broad construction of Rule 24(a)(2), the Community is entitled to
9 intervene as of right.

10 **III. IN THE ALTERNATIVE, THE COMMUNITY ALSO QUALIFIES FOR**
11 **AND SHOULD BE GRANTED PERMISSIVE INTERVENTION UNDER**
12 **RULE 24(b)(1)(B)**

13 Alternatively, the Community moves pursuant to Rule 24(b)(1)(B) for permissive
14 intervention. For the reasons previously stated, this request is timely. And the
15 Community "assert[s] a . . . defense in common with the main action." *Kootenai Tribe of*
16 *Idaho v. Veneman*, 313 F.3d 1094, 1110 (9th Cir. 2002), *abrogated on other grounds by*
17 *Wilderness Soc. v. U.S. Forest Serv.*, 630 F.3d 1173 (9th Cir. 2011). The Community
18 asserts that ICWA is constitutional and that the complaint should be dismissed for failure
19 to state a claim and for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction, for the reasons explained in the
20 proposed motion to dismiss attached to this motion. These defenses are common to the
21 main action.

22 As previously described, the Community has a direct interest in ICWA's
23 constitutionality, as well as in baby girl A.D.'s placement and that placement's effect on
24 the Community's social fabric. The Community's perspective will be valuable to the
25 Court's consideration of issues that will have profound implications for all federally
26 recognized tribes. It would be an abuse of discretion to decide these issues without
27 allowing the Community to be heard on them.

28 **CONCLUSION**

Pursuant to Rule 24(a)(2), the Community has a right to intervene in this suit

1 involving the ultimate home placement for baby girl A.D. Alternatively, the Court should
2 permit the Community to intervene under Rule 24(b)(1)(B).

3
4 Respectfully submitted,

5 Linus Everling (#019760)
6 Thomas L. Murphy (#022953)
7 GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY
8 525 W. Gu u Ki
9 P.O. Box 97
10 Sacaton, Arizona 85147
11 (520) 562-9760
12 Linus.Everling@gric.nsn.us
13 Thomas.Murphy@gric.nsn.us

14 Donald R. Pongrace (pro hac vice
15 application pending)

16 /s/ Merrill C. Godfrey

17 Merrill C. Godfrey (pro hac vice application
18 pending)

19 AKIN GUMP STRAUSS HAUER & FELD
20 LLP

21 1333 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W.
22 Washington, D.C. 20036-1564
23 (202) 887-4000
24 dpongance@akingump.com
25 mgodfrey@akingump.com

26 *Attorneys for Plaintiff Gila River Indian
27 Community²*

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29 ² A separate team of lawyers at Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP represents
30 the Casey Family Programs, which will be seeking leave to appear as amicus curiae in
31 support of Defendants. Neither set of counsel has authored or will author the other set's
32 briefing in whole or in part. The Gila River Indian Community has not provided and will
33 not provide any financial support for the Casey Family Programs' participation in this
34 matter, and the Casey Family Programs have not provided and will not provide any
35 financial support for the Gila River Indian Community's participation in this matter.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on October 16, 2015, I electronically transmitted the foregoing document to the Clerk’s Office using the CM-ECF System for filing and transmittal of a Notice of Electronic Filing to the CM-ECF registrants on record, including:

Clint Bolick (021684)
Aditya Dynar (031583)
Scharf-Norton Center for
Constitutional Litigation at the
Goldwater Institute
500 E. Coronado Rd.
Phoenix, Arizona 85004
(602) 462-5000
litigation@goldwaterinstitute.org

Michael W. Kirk
Brian W. Barnes
Harold S. Reeves
Cooper & Kirk, PLLC
1523 New Hampshire Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 220-9600
(202) 220-9601 (fax)
Attorneys for Plaintiffs

Steven Edward Miskinis
US Dept of Justice
Land & Natural Resources Division
PO Box 44378
Indian Resources Section
Washington, DC 20026
202-305-0262
202-305-0271 (fax)
steven.miskinis@usdoj.gov
Attorneys for Defendants Washburn and Jewell

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25
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27
28

John Stephen Johnson
Office of the Attorney General - Phoenix
1275 W Washington St.
Phoenix, AZ 85007-2997
602-542-9948
john.johnson@azag.gov
Attorneys for Defendant McKay

/s/ Merrill C. Godfrey

1 Linus Everling (SBN 019760)
2 Thomas L. Murphy (SBN 022953)
3 Gila River Indian Community
4 525 W. Gu u Ki
5 P.O. Box 97
6 Sacaton, Arizona 85147
7 (520) 562-9760
8 linus.everling@gric.nsn.us
9 thomas.murphy@gric.nsn.us

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13 application pending) (D.C. Bar No. 464758)
14 Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, LLP
15 1333 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W.
16 Washington, D.C. 20036-1564
17 (202) 887-4000
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19 mgodfrey@akingump.com
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28 capacity as Assistant Secretary –
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Defendants.

Case No. 2:15-cv-1259

**GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY'S
MOTION TO DISMISS (LODGED)**

(Oral Argument Requested)

Pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(b)(1) and 12(b)(6), the Gila River Indian
Community (the "Community") moves to dismiss the complaint with prejudice.

1 Congress recognized that Indian child welfare determinations in state courts had
2 “often failed to recognize the essential tribal relations of Indian people and the cultural
3 and social standards prevailing in Indian communities and families,” *id.* at 45, which
4 often resulted in Indian child adoptive placements that took an Indian child from his or
5 her tribe, tearing the fabric of the tribal community by taking its younger generation and
6 its ability to perpetuate tribal culture and traditions through its people. ICWA is at the
7 core of modern federal Indian policy, which, in contrast with previous destructive policies
8 of allotment, assimilation, and termination, seeks to respect and preserve tribal
9 sovereignty, self-determination, identity, and culture.

10 The provisions challenged here are at the heart of ICWA’s protections. Section
11 1915(a) establishes preferences for adoptive placements for Indian children, and
12 § 1915(b) does the same for foster care or preadoptive placements. These provisions
13 ensure a fair opportunity, absent “good cause to the contrary,” for an Indian child to be
14 placed within his or her extended family, with members of his or her tribe, or (for
15 adoptions) other Indian families or (for foster care) Indian or tribal foster homes or
16 institutions. These provisions represent Congress’s judgment regarding the best interests
17 of children for which the United States has trust obligations of the highest order, to
18 preserve the child’s best chances of a relationship with his or her tribe.

19 Section 1911(b) allows either parent of an Indian child not domiciled on or
20 residing in the child’s tribe’s reservation, an Indian custodian of the child, or the child’s
21 tribe to seek transfer from state court to the jurisdiction of the child’s tribe, absent a
22 showing of “good cause to the contrary.” Section 1912(d) requires any party seeking
23 foster care placement or the termination of parental rights to an Indian child under state
24 law to make active efforts to prevent the breakup of an Indian family that might result
25 from an Indian child’s placement outside his or her tribe. Sections 1912(e) and (f) require
26 heightened standards of proof in such proceedings for any finding that “continued
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1 custody of [an Indian] child by [a] parent or Indian custodian is likely to result in serious
2 emotional or physical damage to the child.”

3 The United States “has a direct interest, as trustee, in protecting Indian children
4 who are members of or are eligible for membership in an Indian tribe.” 25 U.S.C.
5 § 1901(3). ICWA represents nothing less than a set of legislative policy judgments about
6 the best interests of Indian children and the preservation of “the essential tribal relations
7 of Indian people.” 25 U.S.C. § 1901(5). These policy judgments lie with the political
8 branches of government, and courts are not free to override them.

9 Plaintiffs, who are represented by the Goldwater Institute, are (1) two non-Indian
10 couples seeking to adopt Indian children, and (2) the alleged “next friend” of two Indian
11 children suing on the children’s behalf. They ask this Court to declare unconstitutional
12 and to enjoin enforcement of six subsections of ICWA as well as the Bureau of Indian
13 Affairs’ 2015 ICWA Guidelines. They allege (in counts 1, 2, and 3) that these ICWA
14 provisions are “based solely on the race of the child and the adults involved,” Compl.
15 ¶¶ 89, 90; *cf. id.* ¶¶ 99, 108, even though they are based solely on membership (or
16 eligibility for membership) in a federally recognized tribe. They also claim that the
17 challenged provisions of ICWA fail to “adequately consider the child’s best interests” and
18 thus violate due process. ¶ 100. They further allege (in Count 2) that ICWA’s
19 presumptive tribal jurisdiction provision for non-domiciliary Indian children, § 1911(b),
20 violates the Due Process clause on a “minimum contacts” theory. ¶ 98.

21
22 Count 4 alleges that Congress exceeded its constitutional powers when it passed
23 ICWA and that ICWA therefore violates the Tenth Amendment. Compl. ¶ 110. Count 4
24 also alleges that ICWA commandeers state resources and thereby violates the Tenth
25 Amendment under *Printz v. United States*, 521 U.S. 898 (1997). Compl. ¶ 111. Count 5
26 alleges that ICWA violates Indian children’s supposed First Amendment right not to
27 associate with Indian tribes. *See* Compl. ¶¶ 116–18. And finally, throughout their
28

1 Complaint, and more specifically in Count 6, Plaintiffs challenge the Bureau of Indian
2 Affairs' ICWA guidelines issued in February 2015.

3 As shown below, each of these claims is foreclosed by precedent and must be
4 dismissed.

5 **STANDARD OF REVIEW**

6 Taking a complaint's factual allegations as true, under Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(b)(6), a
7 court must dismiss a complaint whose facts "fail to state a claim upon which relief can be
8 granted." With a Rule 12(b)(6) dismissal, "all facts are assumed to be true, but
9 insufficient as a matter of law." *Gomez-Vigil v. I.N.S.*, 990 F.2d 1111, 1117 (9th Cir.
10 1993); *see also SmileCare Dental Grp. v. Delta Dental Plan of California, Inc.*, 88 F.3d
11 780, 783 (9th Cir. 1996) ("The court may dismiss a complaint as a matter of law for . . .
12 lack of a cognizable legal theory.") (citation omitted).

13 **ARGUMENT**

14 ICWA was enacted in furtherance of "the special relationship between the United
15 States and the Indian tribes and their members and the Federal responsibility to Indian
16 people." 25 U.S.C. § 1901. The complaint is entirely silent regarding this relationship
17 and the duties and powers it entails. Indeed, plaintiffs appear wholly unaware of the
18 broad scope of federal powers and duties to protect tribes and their children. Nor do
19 plaintiffs acknowledge the relationship between a tribe and its children that is at the heart
20 of ICWA. Instead, ironically, in framing their complaint as a bid to end racial
21 discrimination, it is the *plaintiffs* who introduce the notion of race, and who see tribal
22 members and their children only by their race. ICWA does not classify children by race,
23 but instead recognizes tribal membership, a concept that is completely absent in the
24 complaint. It is just such disregard for the importance of an Indian child's tribe that led
25 Congress to pass ICWA in the first place.

26
27 Plaintiffs' complaint would eliminate the importance of tribal membership
28 altogether in child custody proceedings, treating children who are tribal members (or who

1 are children of tribal members and are eligible to join) as though they had no tribe,
2 completely undermining the United States' fulfillment of its legally mandated trust duties.
3 This result is foreclosed by clear, controlling authority acknowledging Congress's powers
4 and duties to protect Indian tribes and their children.

5 **I. ICWA IS A VALID EXERCISE OF CONGRESS'S PLENARY POWER TO**
6 **FULFILL THE UNITED STATES' DUTIES TO INDIAN TRIBES.**

7 Federal legislation like ICWA is entitled to a strong presumption of
8 constitutionality. "This is not a mere polite gesture. It is a deference due to deliberate
9 judgment by constitutional majorities of the two Houses of Congress that an Act is within
10 their delegated power or is necessary and proper to execution of that power." *United*
11 *States v. Five Gambling Devices*, 346 U.S. 441, 449 (1953).

12 Congress passed ICWA "for the protection and preservation of Indian tribes," a
13 duty that Congress assumed "through statutes, treaties, and the general course of dealing
14 with Indian tribes." 25 U.S.C. § 1901(2). ICWA exercises powers and recognizes duties
15 that arise out of sovereign-to-sovereign dealings between the United States and Indian
16 tribes (including military conquest) that are reflected in and authorized and adopted by
17 the Constitution. "In the exercise of the war and treaty powers, the United States
18 overcame the Indians and took possession of their lands, sometimes by force, leaving
19 them . . . needing protection against the selfishness of others Of necessity the United
20 States assumed the duty of furnishing that protection and with it the authority to do all
21 that was required to perform that obligation" *Bd. of Comm'rs of Creek Cnty. v.*
22 *Seber*, 318 U.S. 705, 715 (1943). Congress's power to legislate in the field of Indian
23 affairs is based "upon the Constitution's adoption of preconstitutional powers necessarily
24 inherent in any Federal Government, namely . . . 'necessary concomitants of
25 nationality.'" *United States v. Lara*, 541 U.S. 193, 200, 201 (2004) (quoting *United*
26 *States v. Curtiss-Wright Export Corp.*, 299 U.S. 304 (1936)). "[L]argely due to the
27 course of dealing of the Federal Government with [Indian Tribes] and the treaties in
28

1 which it has been promised, there arises the duty of protection, and with it the power.”
2 *United States v. Kagama*, 118 U.S. 375, 384 (1886)). Congress has “broad general
3 powers to legislate in respect to Indian tribes, powers that [the Supreme Court has]
4 consistently described as plenary and exclusive.” *Lara*, 541 U.S. at 200 (internal
5 quotation marks omitted).

6 Review here must be grounded in “the undisputed existence of a general trust
7 relationship between the United States and the Indian people” and ““the distinctive
8 obligation of trust incumbent upon the Government in its dealings with these dependent
9 and sometimes exploited people.”” *United States v. Mitchell*, 463 U.S. 206, 225 (1983)
10 (quoting *Seminole Nation v. United States*, 316 U.S. 286, 296 (1942)). “This principle
11 has long dominated the Government’s dealings with Indians.” *Mitchell*, 463 U.S. at 225
12 (citations omitted). “[T]he United States’ role as the guardian of Indians, Indian tribes,
13 and their property justifies any legislation enacted in this role of guardian.” *Cohen’s*
14 *Handbook of Federal Indian Law* § 5.01.

15 Congress’s power over Indian affairs and to fulfill its trust duties includes the
16 power to protect Indians against state interference. “From almost the beginning the
17 existence of federal power to regulate and protect the Indians and their property against
18 interference even by a state has been recognized. This power is not expressly granted in
19 so many words by the Constitution, except with respect to regulating commerce with the
20 Indian tribes, but its existence cannot be doubted.” *Seber*, 318 U.S. at 715. “Only the
21 United States (as opposed to the states) is sovereign over the entire territory of the United
22 States.” *Cohen’s Handbook of Federal Indian Law* § 5.01.

24 **II. ICWA PROTECTS TRIBAL INTERESTS, TRIBAL MEMBERSHIP, AND**
25 **INDIAN CHILDREN’S BEST INTERESTS, AND DOES NOT USE**
26 **RACIAL CLASSIFICATIONS**

27 This Court must dismiss the plaintiffs’ Due Process and Equal Protection
28 challenges under the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments (Counts 1, 2, and 3), because the

1 plaintiffs' argument that ICWA uses a race-based classification is incorrect as a matter of
2 law.

3 ICWA's foundational definitions are based solely on membership in a federally
4 recognized tribe. ICWA defines "Indian tribe" to include any "Indian tribe, band, nation,
5 or other organized group or community of Indians recognized as eligible for the services
6 provided to Indians by the Secretary because of their status as Indians" 25 U.S.C.
7 § 1903(8). "Indian" is defined by membership in such a tribe, and an "Indian child" must
8 either be "a member of an Indian tribe," or be "eligible for membership in an Indian tribe
9 and is the biological child of a member of an Indian tribe." 25 U.S.C. § 1903(4). ICWA
10 excludes children who are racially "Indian," but who are not members of, and are not
11 eligible for membership as the child of a member in, a federally recognized Indian tribe.
12 Because ICWA's application depends on an Indian child's affiliation with a federally
13 recognized Indian tribe, the law turns on a political classification, not a racial one.

14 The constitutionality of federal laws classifying persons based on tribal
15 membership "turns on the unique legal status of Indian tribes under federal law and upon
16 the plenary power of Congress, based on a history of treaties and the assumption of a
17 'guardian-ward' status, to legislate on behalf of federally recognized Indian tribes."
18 *Morton v. Mancari*, 417 U.S. 535, 551 (1974). Classification as an "Indian" on the basis
19 of membership in a federally recognized tribe is not a racial, but rather a political
20 classification, one that recognizes tribal sovereignty and tribal members' relation to those
21 sovereigns. *See, e.g., Fisher v. Dist. Court*, 424 U.S. 382, 390 (1976) ("The exclusive
22 jurisdiction of the Tribal Court [did] not derive from the race of the plaintiff but rather
23 from the quasi-sovereign status of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe under federal law.").
24 Time and again, the Supreme Court has affirmed that federal laws providing unique
25 treatment to Indians based on their affiliation with federally recognized tribes do not
26 thereby use impermissible racial classifications. *See, e.g., United States v. Antelope*, 430
27 U.S. 641, 646-47 (1977) (federal criminal statutes enforceable only against "Indians" are
28

1 not based on impermissible racial classifications); *Fisher*, 424 U.S. at 390.
2 “[C]lassifications expressly singling out Indian tribes as subjects of legislation are
3 expressly provided for in the Constitution and supported by the ensuing history of the
4 Federal Government’s relations with Indians.” *Antelope*, 430 U.S. at 645. If legislation
5 singling out Indians for special treatment could be “deemed invidious racial
6 discrimination, an entire Title of the United States Code (25 U.S.C.) would be effectively
7 erased and the solemn commitment of the Government toward the Indians would be
8 jeopardized.” *Mancari*, 417 U.S. at 552-53; accord *United States v. Zepeda*, 792 F.3d
9 1103, 1113 (9th Cir. 2015) (en banc) (“[F]ederal regulation of Indian affairs is not based
10 upon impermissible classifications. Rather, such regulation is rooted in the unique status
11 of Indians as ‘a separate people’ with their own political institutions.”). Thus, the
12 plaintiffs’ equal protection and substantive due process challenges to tribal membership
13 classifications fail. See *Antelope*, 430 U.S. at 649; *Mancari*, 417 U.S. at 555.

14 Plaintiffs’ further argument that the Act fails to account for Indian children’s “best
15 interests” (¶ 100) ignores that ICWA is precisely geared to *promote* the best interests of
16 Indian children. ICWA “was based in part on evidence of the detrimental impact on the
17 children themselves of . . . placements outside their culture,” and “on the fundamental
18 assumption that it is in the Indian child’s best interest that its relationship to the tribe be
19 protected.” *Holyfield*, 490 U.S. at 49 – 50 & n.24 (citation and quotation marks omitted).
20 Plaintiffs’ disagreement with Congress over what is best for Indian children does not
21 make a due process violation. See *Reno v. Flores*, 507 U.S. 292, 302-04 (1993).

22 Plaintiffs’ proposed revision of this congressional policy choice would take from
23 Indian children *benefits* unavailable to children not subject to the Act’s protections—
24 provisions that acknowledge and foster the child’s relationship to his or her tribe.
25 Plaintiffs wrongly treat these provisions as *harms* rather than benefits. In attacking
26 consideration of tribal membership and tribal jurisdiction as harms, the complaint
27 employs prejudices similar to views expressly rejected by Congress. In ICWA, Congress
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1 found that states “have often failed to recognize the essential tribal relations of Indian
2 people and the cultural and social standards prevailing in Indian communities and
3 families.” 25 U.S.C. § 1901(5). The complaint (perhaps unwittingly) exhibits similar
4 biases toward the tribal-child relationship and tribal jurisdiction over child custody. This
5 is particularly apparent where none of the provisions Plaintiffs challenge conclusively
6 dictates any particular outcome for an individual child. For example, the “good cause”
7 standard in ICWA is ample protection in any situation where tribal membership or tribal
8 jurisdiction is outweighed by other circumstances.

9 **III. ICWA’S TRANSFER PREFERENCE IN § 1911(b) IS WELL WITHIN**
10 **CONGRESS’S AUTHORITY TO PRESERVE TRIBES’ SOVEREIGN**
11 **RIGHTS OVER THEIR OWN SOCIAL AND DOMESTIC RELATIONS**

12 “Tribal jurisdiction over Indian child custody proceedings is not a novelty of the
13 ICWA.” *Holyfield*, 490 U.S. at 42. Rather, Indian tribes are “distinct, independent
14 political communities, retaining their original natural rights in matters of local self-
15 government [that] remain a separate people, with the power of regulating their internal
16 and social relations.” *Santa Clara Pueblo v. Martinez*, 436 U.S. 49, 55-56 (1978).
17 Inherent tribal power includes the power to make substantive law on internal tribal
18 matters, including domestic relations, and the power to enforce that law in tribal court.
19 *See id.* At the same time, “Congress has plenary authority to limit, modify or eliminate
20 the powers of local self-government which the tribes otherwise possess.” *Id.* at 56; *see*
21 *also Lara*, 541 U.S. at 202 (“Congress, with [the Supreme] Court’s approval, has
22 interpreted the Constitution’s plenary grants of power as authorizing it to enact legislation
23 that both restricts and, in turn, relaxes those restrictions on tribal sovereign authority.”).
24 ICWA expressly recognizes that tribes have been allowed to retain this authority as it
25 relates to child custody proceedings involving Indian children. “Indian tribes are unique
26 aggregations possessing attributes of sovereignty *over both their members and their*
27 *territory* [They] are a good deal more than ‘private, voluntary organizations.’”
28 *United States v. Wheeler*, 435 U.S. 313, 323 (1978) (quoting *United States v. Mazurie*,

1 419 U.S. 544, 557 (1975)) (emphasis added; alteration in *Wheeler*). “Indian tribes still
2 possess those aspects of sovereignty not withdrawn by treaty or statute, or by implication
3 as a necessary result of their dependent status.” *Wheeler*, 435 U.S. at 323. Section
4 1911(b) is an unremarkable and unmistakable exercise of Congress’s power to preserve
5 tribal jurisdiction over tribal members and their children.

6 Section 1911(b)’s application to proceedings involving children not domiciled in
7 or residing on their tribe’s reservation is constitutional because Congress’s power to
8 legislate for the protection and benefit of Indians operates *in personam* and is not limited
9 to any land base or reservation. As just quoted, *Wheeler* recognizes that tribal
10 sovereignty extends not only over “territory” but also over tribal “members.” 435 U.S. at
11 323. Indeed, this principle was relied on in *Holyfield*. While *Holyfield* held that the
12 Indian children at issue were domiciled on the reservation, the Supreme Court’s
13 reasoning shows that Congress’s power to protect and regulate Indians and to preserve
14 tribal sovereignty applies *in personam* to Indian children and is not geographically
15 restricted by reservation boundaries. The twins in that case were born off the reservation
16 and had never been on the reservation. *Id.* at 53. The parents had arranged for birth off
17 the reservation in a deliberate but futile attempt to defeat tribal court jurisdiction. *Id.* at
18 49. The Court held that the twins were nonetheless “domiciled” on the reservation within
19 the meaning of § 1911(a) due to their mother’s domicile on the reservation. If Congress
20 can provide for tribal jurisdiction of children off the reservation by adopting such a
21 meaning of “domicile” in § 1911(a), even when both parents (as in *Holyfield*) sought to
22 *deprive* the tribal court of jurisdiction, then Congress’s power over Indian children is not
23 derived from their location, but is *in personam*. From this it follows that § 1911(b) is
24 constitutional as well. Indeed, § 1911(b) does not exert the full extent of Congressional
25 authority over Indian children, because under § 1911(b) transfer can be defeated by a
26 *state court* finding of “good cause” not to transfer.
27
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1 Similarly, in *United States v. Livingston*, 725 F.3d 1141, 1145 (9th Cir. 2013), the
2 Ninth Circuit held, “We do not agree that congressional authority to criminalize theft
3 from a tribal gaming establishment derives from the location of the gaming
4 establishment.” The Court held that “federal jurisdiction does not depend on proof that
5 the gaming establishment at issue in a [25 U.S.C.] § 1168(b) prosecution is located on
6 Indian lands.” *Id.* at 1145-46.

7 There are many other examples of legislation protecting and benefiting Indians
8 without regard to location on or off a reservation. For example, *Mancari* upheld
9 provisions of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 giving an employment preference for
10 qualified Indians in the Bureau of Indian Affairs without regard to whether the Indians
11 were domiciled on a reservation or whether the job was located on a reservation. *See*
12 *Mancari*, 417 U.S. at 550; *see also, e.g., id.* at 548 (noting a separate congressional
13 requirement that government programs give Indians preference for training teachers of
14 Indian children); American Indian Probate Reform Act of 2004, Pub. L. No. 108-374, 118
15 Stat. 1773 (permitting, among other things, the transfer of trust or restricted fee lands to
16 any Indian or Indian tribe to retain trust or restricted fee status, so long as devised to an
17 Indian); Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, 25 U.S.C.
18 § 450f(a)(1)(E) (1975) (allowing Indian organizations to enter into self-determination
19 contracts with the Secretary of the Interior or Health and Human Services to “plan,
20 conduct, and administer programs or...construction programs . . . for the benefit of
21 Indians because of their status as Indians without regard to the agency or office of the
22 Department of Health and Human Services or the Department of the Interior within
23 which it is performed.”); Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, 25 U.S.C. §§ 1651-
24 1660h (2010) (providing funding for the development of health programs for Indians who
25 live in non-reservation communities); Tribal General Welfare Exclusion Act, 26 U.S.C.
26 § 139E (2014) (permitting tribal members, including those located outside of a
27 reservation, to exclude from gross income, “the value of any Indian general welfare
28

1 benefit,” which is a payment or service made pursuant to a qualified Indian tribal
2 government program).

3 Plaintiffs misguidedly allege that ICWA’s jurisdiction-transfer provision,
4 25 U.S.C. § 1911(b), violates due process personal jurisdiction requirements of
5 “minimum contacts between the forum and the litigant.” Compl. ¶ 98. But “minimum
6 contacts” analysis is inapposite because *plaintiffs* are not involuntary *defendants* being
7 haled into a distant state’s court under state law. The plaintiff couples affirmatively seek
8 to adopt Indian children who are protectable by Congress in the exercise of its broad
9 powers over Indians. *See Santa Clara Pueblo*, 436 U.S. at 55-56; *Cotton Petroleum*
10 *Corp. v. New Mexico*, 490 U.S. 163, 192 (1989); *Livingston*, 725 F.3d at 1145-46.
11 Congress has the power to recognize tribal authority over the granting of such relief and
12 to require plaintiffs to invoke that authority to obtain such relief.

13 Tribal jurisdiction over custody of Indian children such as the plaintiff children is
14 founded on Congress’s recognition of a tribe’s sovereignty over its own members and
15 their children. *See Wheeler*, 435 U.S. at 323. Thus, it is hardly surprising, much less
16 unconstitutional, that a couple seeking to adopt an Indian child must, absent good cause,
17 seek relief from the jurisdiction of the child’s sovereign tribe.

19 **IV. ICWA DOES NOT EXCEED CONGRESSIONAL AUTHORITY OR** 20 **COMMANDEER STATE OFFICERS**

21 Count 4 must be dismissed because ICWA does not exceed the scope of
22 Congress’s constitutional authority. As discussed above, ICWA is well within Congress’s
23 authority to regulate Indian affairs and fulfill trust duties. It is a necessary corollary to
24 this conclusion that ICWA does not violate the Tenth Amendment, because it exercises
25 valid federal power expressed in the Constitution, power “delegated to the United States
26 by the Constitution,” and thus does not infringe on any power “reserved to the States . . .
27 or to the people.” U.S. Const. Am. X. Justice Thomas’s concurrence in *Adoptive Couple*
28 *v. Baby Girl*, 133 S. Ct. 2552, 2566-70 (2013), was joined by no other justice and is not

1 the law. And nothing in *Sosna v. Iowa*, 419 U.S. 393 (1975), addresses Congress's
2 powers in *Indian* domestic relations; as the Supreme Court subsequently stated, it is
3 "undisputed fact that Congress has plenary authority to legislate for the Indian tribes in
4 all matters," and to preserve tribes' sovereign authority. *United States v. Wheeler*, 435
5 U.S. 313, 319 (1978).

6 Plaintiffs' further argument regarding "commandeering" fails for at least two
7 reasons. First, under *Printz v. United States*, 521 U.S. 898, 910-11 (1997), no
8 "commandeering" can occur unless Congress imposes federal responsibilities on State
9 officers without their consent. Here, Arizona has consented to enforce ICWA,
10 specifically by directing state officers to comply with ICWA's provisions, *see* A.R.S. § 8-
11 453(A)(20), (21), and by adjusting the state's own child welfare laws to conform to
12 ICWA where relevant. *See* A.R.S. §§ 8-105.01, -514(C).

13 Second, Plaintiffs fail to explain how any provision of ICWA commandeers state
14 authorities. To the extent Plaintiffs' allegations relate to "state courts," they must be
15 dismissed, because commandeering does not occur when a state court must follow and
16 apply federal law. *See* 521 U.S. at 910-11. And Plaintiffs do not explain how any of the
17 ICWA provisions they challenge command a state officer or agency to do anything. Each
18 of the provisions they challenge provides a rule of decision, specifies a rule of procedure,
19 or prescribes a burden of proof for *court* proceedings.

21 **V. ICWA DOES NOT VIOLATE THE PLAINTIFF INDIAN CHILDREN'S**
22 **FIRST AMENDMENT FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION**

23 Count 5 must be dismissed because ICWA creates no mandatory associations,
24 much less any that violate the First Amendment. Indian children are not required to
25 "associate" with their tribes by virtue of ICWA, which governs only child custody
26 proceedings. Although ICWA is plainly intended to encourage tribal-child relationships,
27 and may result in adoption or other placement with a member of the child's tribe, no child
28 is forced to "associate" with his or her tribe as such.

1 Moreover, in any event, Indian tribes are not mere associations. Again, “Indian
2 tribes are unique aggregations possessing attributes of sovereignty over . . . their
3 members [They] are a good deal more than ‘private, voluntary organizations.’”
4 *Wheeler*, 435 U.S. at 323 (quoting *Mazurie*, 419 U.S. at 557). The First Amendment
5 prohibits mandatory associations unless they “serve a compelling state interest that
6 cannot be achieved through means significantly less restrictive of associational
7 freedoms.” *Knox v. Serv. Employees Int’l Union, Local 1000*, 132 S. Ct. 2277, 2289
8 (2012). But to come within the First Amendment’s “protection of expressive
9 association,” “a group must engage in some form of expression, whether it be public or
10 private.” *Boy Scouts of Am. v. Dale*, 530 U.S. 640, 648 (2000). The Ninth Circuit has
11 further clarified “expressive association” to mean “association for the purpose of speech,
12 assembly, petition for the redress of grievances, and the exercise of religion—but there is
13 no generalized right of social association protecting chance encounters in dance halls and
14 the like.” *S. Oregon Barter Fair v. Jackson Cnty., Oregon*, 372 F.3d 1128, 1135 (9th Cir.
15 2004) (internal quotation marks omitted). Indian tribes are governmental entities,
16 analogous to state and local governments, not associations for the purpose of expression.
17 Treating Indian tribes as expressive associations on par with the Boy Scouts of America
18 ignores and trivializes the unique legal standing of Indian tribes and their authority over
19 their members.
20

21 **VI. THE 2015 GUIDELINES DO NOT CONFLICT WITH ICWA’S** 22 **TRANSFER PROVISIONS**

23 In Count 6, Plaintiffs incorrectly allege that the 2015 Guidelines constitute
24 unlawful agency action that exceeds the statutory authority provided to the BIA by
25 ICWA. This Court lacks subject-matter jurisdiction with respect to this claim, and all
26 other challenges Plaintiffs raise to the Guidelines, because the 2015 Guidelines do not
27 constitute final agency action. “[T]wo conditions must be satisfied for agency action to
28 be ‘final’: First, the action must mark the ‘consummation’ of the agency’s decision-

1 making process, it must not be of a merely tentative or interlocutory nature. And second,
 2 the action must be one by which ‘rights or obligations have been determined,’ or from
 3 which ‘legal consequences will flow.’” *Bennett v. Spear*, 520 U.S. 154, 177-78 (1997)
 4 (internal citations omitted). In a current challenge to the 2015 Guidelines, another federal
 5 district court correctly concluded that “the 2015 Guidelines are not a ‘final agency action’
 6 within the meaning of the APA because they do not create legal rights and obligations,”
 7 and that they “are non-binding interpretive rules.” *Nat’l Council for Adoption vs. Jewell*,
 8 No. 1:15-cv-00675-GBL-MSN, Order Den. Pl.’s Mot. for Partial Summ. J. at 2, ECF No.
 9 61 (E.D. Va. Sept. 29, 2015). For these reasons, the Court has no jurisdiction to review
 10 challenges to the Guidelines or (because they are non-binding) to enjoin their
 11 “enforce[ment]” (Compl. at 28).

12 **VII. PLAINTIFFS LACK STANDING TO CHALLENGE SECTIONS 1912(d),**
 13 **(e), AND (f), AND 1915(b), AND IN ANY EVENT DO NOT MERIT**
 14 **EQUITABLE RELIEF IN LIGHT OF PENDING STATE COURT CASES**

15 Plaintiffs’ situations do not fit neatly into the complaint of the Goldwater Institute.
 16 Even taking Plaintiffs’ characterizations of their respective state court proceedings as
 17 true, Plaintiffs’ challenges to four of the six provisions they cite—§§ 1912(d), (e), (f), and
 18 1915(b)—are not based on any live issues in their individual cases currently pending in
 19 state court. With respect to Plaintiff A.D., the complaint alleges only that the case is
 20 subject to transfer under § 1911(b). With respect to baby boy C., the complaint alleges
 21 only that the state court has not declared him available for adoption. *No plaintiff* alleges
 22 that they seek foster care placement or termination of parental rights. Both plaintiff
 23 children are allegedly *already* in foster care with one of the plaintiff couples. Moreover,
 24 according to the complaint, Plaintiff A.D.’s parents’ rights were already terminated, *see*
 25 ¶ 18, and Plaintiff C’s only known parent allegedly supports adoption by one of the
 26 plaintiff couples, *see* ¶ 21. Because no plaintiff seeks termination of parental rights or
 27 foster care placement, no plaintiff can challenge §§ 1912(d), (e), or (f), or § 1915(b),
 28

1 which are limited to those remedies. Challenges to these provisions should be dismissed
2 under Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(b)(1).

3 Furthermore, the equitable relief Plaintiffs seek concerning pending state court
4 proceedings is inappropriate in light of considerations of comity, equity, and
5 constitutional avoidance. To avoid sovereign immunity issues, plaintiffs seek to invoke
6 this Court's equitable power against state and federal officers in their official capacity.
7 Declining to exercise discretionary equitable powers here and allowing the state court
8 proceedings to run their course will likely avoid unnecessary decision of constitutional
9 questions. The state court custody cases necessarily involve a multitude of sensitive non-
10 constitutional issues, the resolution of which remains uncertain. Plaintiffs may well be
11 granted or denied the relief they seek on sufficient non-constitutional grounds in state
12 court. Thus, abstention under *Railroad Commission v. Pullman Co.*, 312 U.S. 496
13 (1941), is warranted for purposes of constitutional avoidance.

14
15 **CONCLUSION**

16 The Court should dismiss the complaint in its entirety.

17 Respectfully submitted,

18 Linus Everling (#019760)
19 Thomas L. Murphy (#022953)
20 GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY
21 525 W. Gu u Ki
22 P.O. Box 97
23 Sacaton, Arizona 85147
24 (520) 562-9760
25 Linus.Everling@gric.nsn.us
26 Thomas.Murphy@gric.nsn.us
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Donald R. Pongrace (pro hac vice
application pending)

/s/ Merrill C. Godfrey

Merrill C. Godfrey (pro hac vice application
pending)

AKIN GUMP STRAUSS HAUER & FELD
LLP

1333 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036-1564
(202) 887-4000

dpongace@akingump.com

mgodfrey@akingump.com

*Attorneys for Plaintiff Gila River Indian
Community*

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**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF ARIZONA**

A.D. and C. by CAROL COGHLAN
CARTER, their next friend, et al.,

Plaintiffs,

v.

KEVIN WASHBURN, in his official
capacity as Assistant Secretary –
Indian Affairs, et al.,

Defendants.

Case No. 2:15-cv-1259

PROPOSED ORDER

The Gila River Indian Community has moved to intervene as a defendant. For good cause shown,

IT IS ORDERED granting the motion to intervene pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 24(a)(2). The lodged motion to dismiss attached to the motion to intervene is deemed filed.