



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
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Attorney General Abbott Charges Group with Orchestrating Scheme to Sell False U.S. Citizenship

Enforcement action seeks halt to Kaweah Indian Nation Inc. from selling 'tribal' memberships that promise U.S. citizenship

EDINBURG – Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott has taken legal action against three individuals who conceived an unlawful scheme to sell U.S. citizenship to non-citizens. The so-called Kaweah Indian Nation Inc. and the three individuals claimed that non-citizens who purchased "tribal" memberships would be entitled to U.S. citizenship and thus circumvent the ordinary legalization process.

The defendants, the Kaweah Indian Nation Inc., Malcolm L. Webber of Wichita, Kan., (also known as "Grand Chief Thunderbird IV"), Ralph B. Tipton of San Antonio, and Victor Ramirez of Edinburg, grossly exaggerated the legal effect of membership in their so-called "tribe." Although denied tribal status by the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1984, the defendants falsely claimed that the Kaweah Indian Nation Inc. is under consideration as a federally recognized tribe, membership to which automatically confers U.S. citizenship.

Media links
Attorney General's lawsuit against Kaweah Indian Nation Inc., et al.
Sample of fraudulent "Certificate of Citizenship"

"The Office of the Attorney General is committed to strict law enforcement," said

Attorney General Abbott. "With today's enforcement action, we are cracking down on an outrageous scheme to sell United States citizenship. Texans can rest assured we will continue aggressively enforcing the law."

According to the Attorney General's enforcement action, Webber promotes himself as Grand Chief Thunderbird IV, titular head of the Kaweah Indian Nation Inc., while Tipton claims he serves as the group's ambassador to Texas. Ramirez holds himself out as a pastor who promotes the services of the Kaweah Indian Nation Inc. in the Rio Grande Valley. According to court documents filed by the Attorney General, the defendants are suspected of operating both statewide and across the nation.

The three defendants typically solicit pastors in Hispanic communities, ask them to serve as the organization's agents and encourage them to recruit new members to the so-called "tribe." Individuals targeted for recruitment are typically persons who are not legally authorized to reside in the United States. Another category of targets includes those who are authorized to live in the United States on a conditional basis and for a limited period of time.

The defendants' sales pitch to prospective members is that a \$400 membership fee entitles them to Social Security cards, protection from deportation, a "Certificate of Citizenship" and an identification card that confers the rights of a sovereign Indian nation. In reality, the card is legally ineffective and does not alter the purchaser's immigration status. However, the Kaweah Indian Nation Inc.'s claims mislead both the purchasers and others who might be deceived by the false certificates of citizenship.

The Attorney General seeks injunctions to halt all violations of the Texas Deceptive Trade Practices Act, as well as civil penalties of up to \$20,000 per violation of the act.