



# *Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.*

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*Dr. Carroll A. Baltimore, Sr., President    Rev. Kip B. Banks, Sr., Interim General Secretary*

**PROTECT RELIGIOUS AND HUMAN RIGHTS – VOTE NO ON H.R. 687  
SCHEDULED FOR HOUSE FLOOR CONSIDERATION ON SEPTEMBER 19, 2013**

September 15, 2013

Member of Congress  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

***Re:    Opposition to H.R. 687, Southeast Arizona Land Exchange and  
Conservation Act of 2013***

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, I write to respectfully urge you to vote **“NO” on H.R. 687, the Southeast Arizona Land Exchange Act, introduced by Rep. Paul Gosar. This bill is scheduled for House floor on Thursday, September 19, 2013.**

H.R. 687 would direct the Secretary of Agriculture to convey over 2,400 acres of U.S. Forest Service land in southeast Arizona (referred to as Oak Flat) to the Resolution Copper Mining Co., which is owned by the foreign mining giants Rio Tinto PLC (UK) and BHP Billiton Ltd (Australia). If H.R. 687 is enacted, the corporations will operate an unprecedented large-scale copper mine on Oak Flat. They seek to extract one cubic mile of ore from one mile beneath the surface of the earth through a ecologically destructive technique called block cave mining.

This public land at Oak Flat is a place of worship for the Apache, Yavapai, and other tribes in the region. Native Americans have prayed, gathered medical herbs and plants, healed in holy perennial springs, and performed religious ceremonies at Oak Flat since time immemorial. The United States should ensure that they can continue to do so in perpetuity. However, if H.R. 687 is enacted, the mining activities proposed will destroy these places of worship and run afoul of the First Amendment’s protection of the free exercise of religion by Native people. The U.S. Congress should protect Native American religious and human rights and reject H.R. 687.

The free exercise of religion, guaranteed by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and contained in the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, has been, since our nation’s founding, a bedrock for the health of both religion and civil society. Consequently, our government has, historically, protected religion, for the sake of our common good. Today, as always, protecting religious freedom entails protecting not only Christian churches, Jewish synagogues, Muslim mosques, and Buddhist and Hindu temples. It also means protecting Native American sacred sites. H.R. 687 is an unconscionable threat to religious freedom and to the First Amendment.

**“SECURING OUR FUTURE”**

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We thank you for your consideration of our views. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly if you have any questions at (571) 331-3874.

For freedom of religion,

*Carroll A. Baltimore, Sr.*

Dr. Carroll A Baltimore, Sr.  
President



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## **RESOLUTION FOR SUPPORT OF APACHE SACRED SITES AND RITES**

**Whereas, the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.** has gone on record supporting the Apache Nation in their struggle to protect sacred sites and rites from desecration and destruction;

**Whereas,** we recognize that the Apache people and their supporters continue to be engaged in a struggle to protect their sacred sites, including Mount Graham and most recently, the Oak Flat area, from the dangerous intrusion and development of a huge mine perpetrated by two foreign mining companies, who have gone to the US Congress to seek exemption from normal safe practices of permitting mines on Federal lands;

**Whereas,** we recognize that the entire shape of the area comprising Oak Flat, Apache Leap, and Ga'an Canyon and the surrounding watershed is critical for the religious freedom of the Apache people;

**Whereas,** we recognize that the free practice of religion is not possible if the entire shape of the area, including, but not limited to the water, the land, the plants, and the animals are not protected from the impacts of this mining proposal;

**Whereas,** we recognize that the protection of the shape of Oak Flat is not possible unless all people have unfettered religious freedom at Oak Flat;

**Whereas,** we recognize that the perseverance and faith of the Apache people in spite of these desecrations has created a renaissance of strength and spirit that has created a renewal of Apache activities on Mount Graham and Oak Flat that represent a true victory;

**Therefore, be it resolved** that PNBC go on record continuing to stand with the Apache people and their allies in their struggle to protect Mount Graham and the shape of Oak Flat;

**Be it also resolved** that we oppose any legislation that seeks to remove the shape of Oak Flats from Federal public or Tribal ownership through outside privatization;

**Be it also resolved** that we oppose any use of the shape of Oak Flat that desecrates religious freedom or the freedom of all members of the public to freely use and enjoy the area;

**Be it also resolved** that in our support of the Apache people, we call upon the US Government to fulfill its commitment to Native Americans to protect sacred sites and religious freedom whether it be Mount Graham, Oak Flats, or any other sacred site in the United States.

**Finally, be it further resolved** that PNBC commits to send a delegation to the San Carlos Apache Reservation to investigate further how best to support the Apache people in their struggle to protect these and other sacred sites as well as get to know the Apache people who are engaged in this struggle.