

Elouise Cobell nominated for Presidential Medal of Freedom

Written by Gallupsun Staff
Wednesday, 23 November 2016 12:55



WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — It was recently announced that Elouise Cobell will be one of 21 recipients to receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom at a White House ceremony on Nov. 22.

Cobell had passed away on Oct. 16, 2011, at 65 years of age from cancer.

The Blackfeet community leader spent nearly 15 years advancing a class-action lawsuit on behalf of 500,000 Indians against the Interior Department. The lawsuit claimed that the Interior Department had stolen or squandered billions of dollars in royalties owed to individual tribal members in exchange for oil, gas and other leases.

The case was settled in 2009 when the Interior Department agreed to the \$3.4 billion settlement.

“The Office of the President and Vice President commend President Obama for recognizing the critically important work of Elouise Cobell who demonstrated in court the mismanagement of royalties that were owed to tribal nations,” Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye said.

“Her work was exemplary in pushing the federal government toward acknowledging and reconciling their profound mismanagement of money that should have gone to tribes or trust

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beneficiaries. Her work has greatly impacted and benefited many tribal nations. For this, the Navajo Nation greatly supports her posthumous award of the Presidential Medal of Freedom.”

The Presidential Medal of Freedom is the nation’s highest civilian honor.