

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK
GOVERNOR



ANGELA McLEAN
LT. GOVERNOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Thursday, November 5, 2015

CONTACTS:

Tim Crowe, Communications Director, Governor's Office, (406) 444-9844

Governor Bullock Proclaims November 5th Elouise Cobell Day

Helena, Mont. – Today, at a ceremony in the Governor's Reception Room, Governor Steve Bullock was joined by members of the Cobell family, Superintendent Denise Juneau and Senator Lea Whitford, as he signed a proclamation recognizing November 5th of each year as Elouise Cobell Day. November 5th is the day of Cobell's birth. Cobell was the lead plaintiff in a class action lawsuit against the federal government, demanding back payment and better accounting on Individual Indian Money Accounts managed by the BIA.

"Elouise Cobell was a determined fighter who refused to let injustice stand. Through her legacy tireless advocacy for the Blackfeet Nation she inspired not only members of her tribe, but all Montanans and Americans to stand by their convictions even in the face of overwhelming opposition," Bullock said of Cobell. "It is my honor to honor her legacy by proclaiming November 5th as Elouise Cobell Day."

Cobell served as the treasurer of the Blackfeet Tribe for over a decade, where she discovered the accounting of the management of individual lands held in trust by the United States to be in chaos and filed the largest class-action suit against the federal government in United States history to recover royalties that had never been paid. She was the lead plaintiff in a lawsuit filed in 1996, known as Cobell v. Salazar, which after 14 years of litigation resulted in a 2009 settlement of \$3.4 billion, approved by Congress and the President in 2010 to provide payment to those whose property had been held in trust.

"Growing up, my mother instilled in me a deep commitment to standing up for what is right, no matter how difficult that task is," said Turk Cobell, Elouise's son. "I'm humbled to join Governor Bullock today as we honor my mother's legacy, and ensure that the values she lived by are shared with future generations."

Cobell passed away in 2011.

"I'm proud to honor a woman who stood up and fought for what's right," Superintendent Denise Juneau said. "Elouise Cobell was one of my heroes and all American Indians can thank her for never giving up."

The proclamation came after the 2015 Legislature failed to pass a bill sponsored by Sen. Whitford that would have named the day in honor of Cobell.

"Elouise Cobell showed generations of the Blackfeet Nation that through smart, determined advocacy, it is possible to overcome institutional injustice," Whitford said. "She serves as an inspiration to all who fight to improve the lives of those who are marginalized."

###