

Kevin Washburn

Kevin Washburn is the dean and a professor of law at the University of Iowa College of Law.

Dean Washburn served for most of President Obama's second term as the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the U.S. Department of the Interior, where he was primarily involved in overseeing the government-to-government relationship between the U.S. government and the nation's federally-recognized Indian tribal nations, now numbering 574. Dean Washburn later took partial leave from his teaching duties to run the Biden-Harris Transition Team for the U.S. Department of the Interior. Washburn's prior federal service includes serving as an Assistant U.S. Attorney, as a trial attorney at the U.S. Department of Justice Environment and Natural Resources Division, and as general counsel of the National Indian Gaming Commission, a small federal regulatory agency. All of this work was focused on meeting the federal trust responsibility to American Indian tribal nations. Washburn began his legal career by clerking for Judge William C. Canby, Jr., of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, a noted expert on federal Indian Law.

Prior to Iowa, Dean Washburn served as the dean and a professor of law at the University of New Mexico School of Law. He has been a law professor for several years, teaching Federal Indian law and numerous other courses at the University of Minnesota, the University of Arizona, and the Universities of Iowa and New Mexico. He also served for one year as a visitor at the Harvard Law School and has taught law courses at the Universities of Montana and Nebraska. He has also authored a casebook on Federal Indian law, a case book on Gaming/Gambling Law, and edits the leading treatise in the field, Felix Cohen's Handbook of Federal Indian Law.

Dean Washburn has worked to improve federal Native American policy both from within the federal government and from the outside. He has testified before Congressional committees approximately 30 times. His research as a law professor and dean helped to develop federal laws that restored tribal sovereignty in criminal justice, including the Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010 and the Violence Against Women Reauthorization of 2013. He has also worked hard to increase tribal co-management of federal public lands. He has occasionally served as a part-time appellate judge for tribal courts.

Dean Washburn has served as the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Law School Admission Council, on the executive committee of the American Association of Law Schools, and on the boards of the Conservation Land Foundation and the Resources Legacy Fund.

A graduate of the University of Oklahoma and Yale Law School, Dean Washburn is a member of the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma and spent much of his childhood within the Chickasaw Reservation in Oklahoma, primarily within the Chickasaw communities of Ada and Purcell. His mother has served for several years as the chairwoman of the Chickasaw Tribal Elders Council.