



## PILAR THOMAS

### Of Counsel

PThomas@LRRLaw.com

#### Tucson

One S. Church Avenue  
Suite 700  
Tucson, Arizona 85701

**Phone** 520.629.4455

**Fax** 520.879.4714

#### ▶ MAIN BIO

#### NEWS

#### RELATED PRACTICES

- Gaming
- Tribal Affairs and Gaming
- Tribal Lands and Natural Resources

#### EDUCATION

- J.D., Indian Law, *magna cum laude*, University of New Mexico School of Law, 2002, Order of the Coif
- B.A., Economics, Stanford University, 1983

#### BAR ADMISSIONS

- Arizona, 2002

Pilar Thomas is Of Counsel in the firm's Tribal Lands and Natural Resources, Alternative Energy and Utilities, and Tribal Affairs and Gaming practice groups. Her practice is focused on Indian law, tribal renewable energy project development and finance, tribal economic development, and Indian gaming.

She assists clients with strategic legal advice on tribal energy policy and planning, renewable energy project development and finance, federal and state energy regulatory, programs, and policy efforts, tribal gaming regulations, gaming-related transactions, litigation, and other business and economic development efforts.

Prior to returning to the firm, Pilar was the Deputy Director for the Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs at the U.S. Department of Energy, where she was responsible for developing and implementing policy and program efforts within the department and federal government to achieve the office's policy objectives, particularly the promotion of energy development, electrification, and infrastructure improvement on tribal lands. Working directly with tribes, tribal energy resource development organizations, tribal utilities, tribal enterprises, Alaska Native villages and corporations, Pilar provided hands-on technical assistance, including strategic energy planning, education and capacity building, market research and analysis, and federal program support. She spearheaded federal agency efforts to coordinate and collaborate on tribal energy development efforts, in partnership with the White House Council on Native American Affairs, the Departments of the Interior, Agriculture, Commerce and Environmental Protection Agency.

She is the former Deputy Solicitor of Indian Affairs for the U.S. Department of the Interior, where she provided legal advice to the Secretary, Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs, and other department officials on decisions related to tribes and matters related to federal Indian law, tribal law, administrative law, Indian water rights, . Pilar provided guidance and advice as needed in policy, program formulation and litigation strategies,

interpreting existing laws, statutes, rules, regulations or other legal authority affecting actions, proposed or taken under Departmental programs and operations. A representative sample of the legal matters handled include:

- Renewable energy projects lease and right of way reviews
- Indian gaming compact reviews
- Land into trust decisions, guidance, and Carcieri analysis
- Leasing regulation reform
- Tribal consultation policy formation
- Federal legislation, including the HEARTH Act and Tribal Law and Order Act
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

She also served as the Interim Attorney General and Chief of Staff to Chairwoman Herminia Frias of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, of which she is a member. As Interim Attorney General, Pilar provided legal advice and representation for the Tribe, Tribal Council, Divisions, Departments, Commissions, and Enterprises on extensive legal issues, including employment law, gaming law, environmental law, self-determination contracting, tribal constitutional law, and internal policies. Her experience included drafting tribal resolutions and ordinances, negotiating and drafting business contracts, government contracts, intergovernmental agreements, and other transactional legal items. She also represented the Tribe on external intergovernmental issues, including federal and state legislation and administrative actions.

In 2002, Pilar was appointed to the position of trial attorney in the U.S. Department of Justice, Environment and Natural Resources Division, Indian Resources Section. Her practice included Indian treaty rights, water rights, and regulatory litigation. She was the recipient of the department's Service Award for her efforts in the *United States v. Michigan* treaty rights litigation.

Prior to her law practice, Pilar worked for fifteen years in the financial services industry as a marketing director and in operations management.

## **MEMBERSHIPS AND AFFILIATIONS**

- Federal Bar Association, Member
- National Native American Bar Association, Member
- Native American Bar Association of Arizona, Member
- Native American Bar Association of D.C., Member
- Energy Bar Association, Member

## **PUBLICATIONS**

- Author, "Governance and Jurisdiction Over Energy Development on Tribal Lands," *American Bar Association, Section on Environment and Energy Resources Newsletter*, January 2012