

Leno seeks law enforcement funds for Terminated Tribes

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Grand Ronde Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno used his precious five minutes before the U.S. House Committee for Appropriations’ Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies on Tuesday, May 16, to request adequate law enforcement funding for Terminated Tribes in the federal government’s 2018 fiscal budget.

Leno was among a slew of Tribal leaders who were given five minutes each in groups of four to testify before the subcommittee, which was chaired by Rep. Ken Calvert, a California Republican.

Other members of the subcommittee included Betty McCollum, a Minnesota Democrat, and Derek Kilmer, a Washington state Democrat.

“The lack of adequate law enforcement funding for our Reservation and, in particular, the continued impacts that Termination has had on Grand Ronde’s ability to secure federal funding for much needed law enforcement services,” Leno said. “Grand Ronde’s Reservation is located in outlying areas of Polk, Yamhill, Lincoln County and Tillamook County in rural northwest Oregon. The Tribe has over 5,000 members.

“The Tribe was Terminated by the federal government in 1954, but we all stayed there in Grand Ronde. We were restored by the government in 1983. Grand Ronde, like other Terminated Tribes, did not receive any of the federal money for services and infrastructure that was otherwise available in Indian Country in the years before Restoration. Since Restoration, the Tribe has spent a lot of time and money rebuilding its Tribal community, including the development of housing, which is approximately



In this screenshot, Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno is seen testifying before the U.S. House Committee for Appropriations’ Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday, May 16. Leno requested adequate law enforcement funding for Terminated Tribes in the federal government’s 2018 fiscal budget.



Contributed photo by Rob Greene

Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno, left, met with Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley during his trip to Washington, D.C., on Wednesday, May 17. Leno also testified before a congressional committee regarding law enforcement funding for Terminated Tribes, such as Grand Ronde, during his time there.

over 200 houses to support Tribal members, not counting the outside community.”

Leno said the high crime rate in Grand Ronde combined with

inadequate police coverage by local counties prompted the Tribe to either fund or provide law enforcement in the community. In 2012, the Tribe started its own police department, which is now the primary law enforcement agency in the Grand Ronde area.

“Crime on our Reservation is a problem,” Leno said. “The Grand Ronde Tribal Police Department and Polk County Sheriff’s Office

handled nearly 900 cases in 2015 and more than 1,000 in 2016 in the Grand Ronde area. The numbers so far suggest that we are on track to handle an estimated 1,200 cases in 2017. Drug-related crime is a real concern for our community as is an increase in sex crimes.

“Any reductions in force will result in a loss of gains made and reduce our ability to keep our youth safe and drugs off of our lands. While Grand Ronde has made great strides in rebuilding its Reservation community, the Tribe continues to suffer the effects of 29 years of Termination and it continues to have problems getting funding for law enforcement.

“The Tribe has never received operational funding from BIA and requests for funding have been denied. The Tribe has utilized COPS grants and state grants to fund some law enforcement and emergency preparedness functions. ... Due to the high crime rates in the remote and rural area, which also contains one of the largest tourist destinations in the state, it is imperative that there be police protection and the Tribe needs BIA funding to provide it.”

Leno said that had the Grand Ronde Tribe not been Terminated, the BIA would have contracted with the Tribe to provide law enforcement on the Reservation under the 638 Program, which gives Tribes the authority to contract with the federal government to operate programs serving Tribal members.

“There is a lack of law enforcement funding for Indian Country,” Leno said. “As a formally Terminated Tribe, Grand Ronde and other Tribes that have been restored are at a disadvantage as we are unable to secure law enforcement funding through the 638 Program. BIA funding should be made available to those Tribes who have been Terminated and restored, and who provide criminal law enforcement in their respective communities.”

Calvert asked Leno why the Grand Ronde Tribe was Terminated and Leno said he believes it was because of the desire to possess the valuable timber on Tribal lands.

Calvert said he and McCollum also sit on the Armed Services Committee. The Trump administration has asked for a substantial increase in military spending at the expense of domestic programs.

Calvert said that a federal budget should be worked out that would not “devastate” the Department of the Interior and its funding for myriad programs in Indian Country.

Other Tribal representatives endorsed stable or increased funding for such important Tribal issues as language revitalization, sea lion control, moving to higher ground out of tsunami zones, Bureau of Indian Affairs forestry funds and fully funding the Indian Health Service.

Leno was accompanied by Tribal Council member Tonya Gleason-Shepek, Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Hernandez and Tribal Attorney Rob Greene. ■

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