

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



Chairman Delores Pigsley

In the past few weeks, several important events have taken place that I would like to highlight for your information.

First, the U.S. Congress defeated the Graham-Enzi-Reid bill, which if passed would have been detrimental to tribes and specifically to Indian gaming. Its defeat was the result of the concerted effort of tribes across the country and underscores the importance of coordinated intertribal political effort and, I might add, the help of our non-Indian friends. I am proud that the Siletz Tribe was an active participant in defeating this bill.

I was among the representatives of six tribes who met with U.S. congressional representatives in Phoenix, Ariz., during Sept. 24-26. Sens. Akaka of Hawaii, Inouye of Hawaii,

Torricelli of New Jersey, Johnson of South Dakota, plus the staff representing Rep. Daschle, were among those participating. This was an opportunity for tribal representatives to share with these individuals, one-on-one, some basic Indian issues. It appears there is emerging within the Senate a strong coalition of Indian advocates who care about Indian issues and are supportive of tribes. The importance of keeping our legislators informed of issues from the tribes' perspective was emphasized.

Also, I recently attended a meeting of the Democratic House Campaign Committee, held in Portland, to discuss the coming election. Rep. Pat Kennedy gave the keynote address. Reps. Darlene Hooley, Earl Blumenauer, and David Wu participated in the meeting. Rep. Peter DeFazio was unable to attend.

Historically, the Democrats have generally been more favorable to Indian tribes than the Republicans. But there are notable exceptions - former Sens. Hatfield and Packwood, former Gov. Atiyeh, and of course, Sen. John McCain, who as chairman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee was a dedicated, bold and eloquent advocate of Indian tribes. All are Republicans, which points out the fact that it isn't necessarily membership in a particular party that counts, but their understanding of Indian issues, their views regarding tribal sovereignty, and empathy for the needs and aspirations of Indian people.

Our responsibility as Indian people is to know who these legislators

are and where they stand on issues, keep them informed, and act accordingly.

Finally, I'd like to state how proud I was that the tribe was host to the third annual Government-to-Government Summit, held October 17-18 at Chinook Winds. Gov. John Kitzhaber initiated the summit based on his Executive Order 96-30, issued in 1996. It brings together the chairmen and the staffs of all Oregon tribes, the governor, and the heads of all state of Oregon departments in face-to-face dialogue on a wide spectrum of issues and programs affecting Oregon tribes. More than 150 tribal and state representatives attended the summit. Through cluster group sessions, they are delving not only into broad Indian issues, but also specifically the process by which tribes can gain better access to state programs and services.

At the same time the summit was in session, Chinook Winds was also the scene of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Managers' Conference during Oct. 18-21. This was coordinated by Portland Area Director Stan Speaks and hosted by the Siletz Tribe. The conference brought together more than 180 participants, including Assistant Secretary of the Interior Kevin Gover, selected central office staff, the superintendents, area directors, and selected tribes from across the country.

I would like to call your attention to the article and photos in this issue of Siletz News that highlight both the state/tribal summit and BIA conference that we, the Siletz Tribe, were proud to host at Chinook Winds.

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"Those of you in this room will choose how to define the government-to-government relationship," he said. "We have huge areas of common ground to make progress to benefit everyone involved."

The summit also included several cluster group meetings on the Siletz reservation. More than 100 people attended to discuss public safety, economic development, health, education, culture, and natural resources.

Running concurrent to the annual summit was the BIA Managers' Conference, featuring Kevin Gover, assistant secretary for Indian Affairs, and Stan Speaks, northwest regional director of the BIA.

At a news conference after his keynote address, Gover said that tribal sovereignty nationwide is the strongest it's ever been and will continue to get stronger.

"Tribes are using sovereignty to make improvements in the lives of tribal members," he said. "The BIA will continue to play a big role, primarily in trust responsibilities and the protection of natural resources. As tribes take on more responsibility, the BIA will continue to redefine its relationship with tribes."

Gover said the biggest issues facing tribes are the annual federal budget, the fee-to-trust process, gaming, state/tribal relationships, and trust responsibilities.

Indian tribes have the strength in Congress to fight off negative attacks, Gover said. More tribes have come to Washington, D.C., than ever before. Gover said that more Indian tribes now engage in political campaigns through voting and contributions.

A dinner at the Siletz Tribal Community center and a performance by the Feather Dancers at the dance house followed the day's meetings for both groups.