

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the editor:

What trickery these constitutional amendments?

In March, Craig Dorsay, tribal attorney, and Delores Pigsley, Tribal Council chairwoman, without the original Constitution to compare and without identifying the changes, told tribal members about constitutional changes. Because the justifications given are false, it would be foolish for anyone to vote without comparing the amendments to the current Constitution.

Dorsay and Pigsley proposed to place Tribal Council in complete control of Tribal Court, destroying tribal member rights to appeal Tribal Council decisions that deprive due process/equal protection or other civil rights. Currently, there are two instances when the Tribal Council and Tribal Court may interact. First, the appointment of judges is made by the Tribal Council. The other interaction occurs when Tribal Council decisions are appealed in Tribal Court.

Dorsay and Pigsley proposed for Tribal Council to become the head of Tribal Court, a guarantee that tribal government will not hear complaints against itself in court. The current separation of powers provision in the Constitution is a good thing! This provision is embodied in the federal legal system, which we name as an authority by our Constitution. It is meant to protect us from government excesses!

Their story about a catastrophic reduction of Tribal Council is a false concern. The Tribal Council Rules and Procedures Ordinance is the appropriate place for

procedures in the event of a catastrophe. Instead, the proposed quorum amendment eliminates the current constitutional provision for five members to be at meetings in order to vote and conduct business.

Five members of nine total members of the Tribal Council is a simple majority. Reducing it to three alters two constitutional provisions. First, it strips the requirement of a simple majority and second, the tribe would no longer be "government by representation."

We currently elect nine representatives to Tribal Council. They want members to be "seated" (not elected) and for only three (non-majority) of the nine members to be present, with two votes binding on the tribe (all of us). Currently, the representative government and the five-member quorum are good things! Tribal Council is a myth if only three have to be present and two members could relinquish tribal rights and assets. Just two votes could terminate the tribe.

Pigsley and Dorsay's article in March misled on the amendment for calling meetings within three days. Meeting procedures need to be in the Rules and Procedures Ordinance, just like the procedures to follow in the event of a catastrophe. Proposing to change the Constitution as unclearly, unnecessarily, and inappropriately as Dorsay and Pigsley did shows me that whatever we are paying them for needs to be investigated. Tribal Council should retract these amendments.

Cynthia Viles

To the editor:

I am writing once again to urge each General Council member to exercise your constitutional rights by voting **NO** on the proposed amendments. Consider the ramifications if they do pass.

You will be stripped of your right to vote for your leadership, just as you were in August 1998. You will have no legal recourse in Tribal Court against the injustices of a corrupt Tribal Council, just as what has been occurring since August 1998. You will be telling this "renegade" council that it is perfectly all right to spend your money to benefit only a select few. I, for one, feel that the membership deserves equality in services, benefits, and protection of the laws, which is what is supposed to take place in a democracy.

In the past, our tribe has taken pride in being the first to venture into new arenas. We were the first tribe in Oregon to be restored federal recognition. Again, we were one of the first tribes in the nation to undertake a coordinated effort of our social services (ESP, TANF). These two examples alone had some very serious derogatory affects on our people.

Let us not be the first tribe in the nation to give up our rights as individuals and allow a dictatorship to determine our future and those of our children and grandchildren.

Again, please vote no on the constitutional amendments!

Sincerely,
Pat Duncan

To the editor:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Craig and Kris Whitehead. I am speaking of the Commitment Ceremony they held for their son, San Poil. It was at that ceremony that I made the commitment to support San Poil, that I would do all that I could to ensure that this community was a safe place for him to grow up in.

I believe in ceremony, prayer, and sacrificing my time to teach and share. I am struggling with my concern for the youth in the Siletz community. I find it difficult to accept that they have very limited access to structured activities where they are surrounded by adults or people modeling healthy attitudes and behavior.

I find myself becoming angry for the choices of other people to not strive to be clean and sober, or to not make the commitment to take the time to care about or spend time with members of our community. For this, I am sorry and I apologize. My apology is not to say I am wrong or right, but only to say I am sorry for

the bad feelings that exist in our tribal workplace or community. These bad feelings build barriers between us that prevent us from working together to create a healthy community.

I am writing this letter to ask adults to make a commitment, to be honest and kind in their process to take the time to be with, share, or teach the youth, adults, and elders. I hope that this letter will help us look at the importance of spending time with our people and to make the commitment to **be there**. I have found that often I try to make things happen, to create and plan activities, that I do not have the energy to do by myself.

We have a community center, but not really any community activities. We have a youth center, but not really any youth activities. I remember my boys saying, "You know, mom, the times I got in the most trouble was when I was bored." I remember, and because of this strong message, I make the effort to plan and make activities available. I hope these words will help

community members and tribal staff strive to collaborate and provide activities for all of our people.

I would like to thank people who have volunteered or supported me in this process: Ray Blacketer, Brenda Bremner, Laura Bremner Kelly Ellis, Judy Imbler, Natasha Kavanaugh, ICW Program staff, Rena Philbrook, my spiritual relations, and my family.

Special thanks to Kent Rilatos and Bev Youngman for continuing the Open Gym activity, and to Ronell Welch and Kelly Strickler for their help with after-school activities.

Most importantly, thank you to the youth who participated. There are so many of you, you know who you are! Keep taking the time to share and teach others. You have the gift of youth and energy. Thanks for sharing your gift with the adults in the community.

Lisa Brown