

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the editor:

On Dec. 7, 2000, our tribe faced a momentous challenge to our democracy. Thanks to the voters who voted NO on all proposed amendments, our constitutional rights have been protected, especially our right to vote.

The voting process was in the news for over a month with the presidential election. Just as we expect a fair process in national elections, we must demand fair elections within our tribe. There was overwhelming support by the General Council for electronic voting. Why has there been no move to assure the membership of a fair voting process in Tribal Council elections? There are a few suggestions I would like to make to improve voter confidence in the current election procedures:

- **The ballots must be tamper-proof.**

Sequential numbering stamped on the ballots with different color ink will enable the Election Board to verify the accuracy of the vote tally. The total number of printed ballots compared to the total ballots cast and the unused ballots should be equal, and there should be no ballots with duplicate numbers. These figures should be included in the Election Board's certification.

- **Security of the ballots is essential.**

Except for the voter, a ballot should **never** be accessible to any

other individual at any time. Ballots must be secured immediately after printing through the close of the election. All mail-in ballots could be secured at the post office and retrieved only on Election Day by the full Election Board with observers watching the process. This procedure may delay the final tally due to signature verification, but the assurance of a legitimate election outweighs the time factor in counting the votes.

- **The counting of the ballots must be open to observers.**

Interested observers could look at each of the ballots as the votes noted on the ballots are being announced.

- **The poll book and copies of signature envelopes should be public information.**

Documents showing only whether or not a person voted, not how the vote was cast, should be accessible upon request.

These procedures are just a few that could be implemented to prevent the appearance of election fraud. Voters must be assured that the successful candidates are elected legitimately in order to have confidence in their leadership. I urge you to demand that the Election Board enact procedures to protect your vote.

Sincerely,
Pat Duncan

To the editor:

For what it is worth!

The results from the tribal constitutional amendment election, the following results were posted:

Tribal members **eligible** to vote: 2,192

Tribal members taking time to register: 679

Tribal members who actually **voted**: 335

The results from the ballot were:

Measure	Yes	No
A	124	210
B	135	200
C	147	187
D	148	186
E	155	174

Isn't it strange how close the votes are?

The tribal Constitution is the document that we as a nation are governed by, just as the Constitution of the United States governs us as U.S. citizens. When you look at it, we are United States citizens first since this is our country. As Siletz Indians, we are in the minority by the very nature of our being a sovereign nation. The only higher body to have any say in how we live our lives and govern our nation is the United States government, and yet we are all too willing to allow the governing document to be amended or remain status quo by 14 percent of our people.

The idea that we as a tribe be

self-governing is a wonderful concept, however, if we are to be self-governing, we as tribal members have the responsibility to take an active part in our government.

The proposed tribal constitutional amendments were decided by 1/7th of our nation. Is that the percentage we want to decide how and what controls our nation? For those who say, "My vote doesn't count or matter," look at the national election recently decided. The results were separated by fractions of a percent. If we want to be self-governing, we must be willing to make the effort to speak our minds and to cast our votes.

The bottom line is this:

Are we willing to be controlled by the voice of so few?

Do we consider the power of the vote to be so minor in our lives?

Have you considered what it would be like if we were not allowed to vote?

The vote (The Voice of the People) is what can control the destiny of this country and our nation. If you want to have a say in the way the tribe is run, then you have to be willing to have your voice be heard and your vote counted. The destiny of our communities, our counties, our states, our country, and our nation lies in the hands of those who vote.

By the Great Spirit, I made a difference. I voted. Did you?

Thomas E. Siniscal

To the editor:

This is a critique on the article "Criminal Code & ICRA" by Diane Henkels.

The U.S. Constitution states "Treaties are the supreme law of the land." Treaties are joint agreements made between "sovereign" nations. The Siletz Nation is a sovereign nation. We have the right to make our own laws, mistakes, and triumphs.

In the Indian Civil Rights Act, the U.S. government tells sovereign nations how to govern themselves; the same government that stole our land, language, culture, lives, and violated article 2 sections a-e of the U.N. Convention on Genocide against members of our nation. This

same government gave Indians forced adoptions, boarding schools (where children were raped, tortured, murdered, etc.), reservations with abject poverty, forced sterilizations, small pox blankets, etc.

Our tribal government bares the throat of our nation to the same government that has attempted to wipe us off the face of the earth. Are we a sovereign nation? No. We are subjects of the great white father in D.C. Do you expect us to believe they have our best interests at heart?

As far as prohibiting peyote on the rez because it's "not part of our tradition," well neither are

pow-wows, casinos, electricity, computers, Christianity, TV, automobiles, the English language, etc. Peyote has helped many Indians. Why is this not addressed? Internalized racism, maybe?

There was only mention of alcohol and drugs, yet no mention of what guides us to abuse them, such as hopelessness, despair, and the lack of community activities. And what about the whole spectrum of drugs - aspirin, over-the-counter drugs, prescriptions, caffeine, tobacco (tobacco is also a sacrament to many Indians), etc. (10 times more people die of prescription overdoses than illegal drug overdoses)?

I see the word "punishment" many times but never "discipline." We're willing to punish Dave for beating up Bob, but we are not willing to discipline Dave for his actions. We are not willing to teach Dave alternatives to violence, how to apologize and make amends, or to be a stronger citizen of the Siletz Nation. But we are willing to bow to our white masters in D.C. and punish Dave. And what happens after he gets out? Nothing.

Let's think as a sovereign nation, not as a subject of the government of the U.S.

Thank you,
Eugene Johnson