

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

In this issue of *Siletz News*, I'd like to touch on two general areas, one involving a couple of national Indian issues and the other regarding matters here at home.

Senate Bill 1529 to Amend IGRA

Chairman Ben Nighthorse Campbell, R-Colo., and Vice Chairman Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii, of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs introduced a bill to amend the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA). They explained, "It is important to keep in mind the twin aims of the act: to ensure that gaming continues to be a tool for Indian economic development and to ensure that the games conducted are kept free from corrupting influences to maintain the integrity of the industry."

They could have added to economic development, "promoting of self-sufficiency and strong tribal governments" – purposes that are specifically stated in the preamble to IGRA.



To the editor:

On behalf of the Ben family, we would like to thank all of the friends and relatives who called, sent cards or letters, or attended the services for Rod when he passed away.

We will not attempt to thank all the people who helped us during this time because we know we would leave someone out. We would, however, like to thank staff at the tribal office, the maintenance crew, and especially the kitchen committee who served the dinner after the services. They all did a wonderful job and it was greatly appreciated.

Again, thanks to all the people who reached out to our family and assisted us in this very difficult time.

Ed and Delores Ben and family



Chairman Delores Pigsley

The bill addresses a number of issues. It would:

- Require the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) to undertake a strategic plan as the National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA) has been urging
- Clarify that Class II technologic aids are not prohibited by the Johnson Act in accordance with several federal courts of appeals
- Clarify NIGC's authority regarding Class III gaming
- Establish guidelines for limiting revenue sharing with other tribes, local governments, and states
- Authorize NIGC to issue minimum internal control standards for the conduct of gaming and require that those regulations be revised through negotiated rulemaking with tribal governments
- Require NIGC to consult with tribes on a government-to-government basis

Since Congress wasn't in session in August, no action is expected on the bill until it reconvenes. In a future issue, I'll report on what congressional action has been taken on SB1529.

Reorganization and Trust Management

After nearly two years, the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) trust management remains a hot and unresolved issue. Tribes and the Department of the Interior (DOI) are still miles apart.

Tibes haven't bought into Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton's plan to resolve the trust management issue through her proposal to reorganize the BIA.

The department's plan, which tribes seem almost universally to oppose, would establish a trust management structure independent of BIA regional offices, led by the same official who now directs the Office of Special Trustee (OST). OST funding would increase by \$275 million by taking funds away from various ongoing – and already underfunded – BIA programs.

Early on, it was widely publicized that a Tribal Leaders Trust Reform Task Force had been established to advise the secretary on reforming the BIA to address trust issues. The department created a joint task force with the assistant secretary of Indian Affairs and the president of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) as co-chairs.

But there was general tribal discontent on how the joint task force was structured and how the department was limiting participation by tribal leaders. Because tribes wouldn't agree to the Interior's proposed reform, the task force was dissolved.

That's where the critical issue of trust reform stands today. It still remains a principal issue on the agendas of NCAI and the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI). Trust reform is expected to be a major topic at ATNI's 50th annual conference this month.

Siletz Valley School No Longer a Dream

Faced with the closure of Siletz School, which had been in existence since 1918, the Siletz Tribal Council took the bold step of putting into action our vision of a tribally run school in Siletz.

Several months ago, the Tribal Council hired a consultant, Van Peters, to help us put together a plan for a charter school. As described in greater detail elsewhere in this issue of *Siletz News*, the charter school proposal was approved by the Lincoln County School Board and the Oregon Department of Education in July. The newly named Siletz Valley School will be tribally administered and begins operating this month, serving both tribal and non-Indian children who live in the Siletz area.

Putting together a viable plan for a charter school for approval by the school board was a major challenge.

The challenge still before us is to create a school that successfully meets the educational and social needs of our children. This Tribal Council, our education staff, teachers, and others involved have the commitment to make that a reality.

Oregon's Economy, *The Wall Street Journal*, and Chinook Winds

Finally, I'd like to comment on the success of, and contributions to the community as a result of, Chinook Winds, our tribal enterprise.

A recent front-page article in the July 30 issue of *The Wall Street Journal* described the horrible state of Oregon's economy and joblessness.

The article prompted Forrest Gerard, a former consultant to the Siletz Tribe and retired assistant secretary of the Interior, to comment to us how proud the Siletz Tribe must be that "despite Oregon being at the bottom of the national economic barrel, the Siletz Tribe enjoys a thriving gaming enterprise that generates significant revenues and jobs that benefit not only the tribe and its members but surrounding communities."

He hoped the "council and tribal members would give support to Chinook Winds management and tribal members would rally behind our staff and their commitment to make us one of the best casinos in the nation." Management has demonstrated its leadership ability to make Chinook Winds stand out with the best.

Forrest went on to express his hope that tribal members would keep in mind "how fortunate the tribe is for having a tremendously successful tribal enterprise despite Oregon's pitiful economy and in the face of fierce competition from the neighboring casino which sits strategically en route to Lincoln City."

The revenues and jobs generated by Chinook Winds have been reported in other publications. Regarding whether the tribe carries its weight in generating taxes, I'd like to point out that it's because of the presence of the tribe's gaming enterprise that significant state and federal payroll taxes are being paid.

For the first half of 2003 alone, employer-paid payroll taxes totaled \$1,098,220; employee-paid payroll taxes totaled \$784,204.