

VICE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Economic Impact of Indian Gaming in Oregon

The study to determine the economic impact of Indian gaming in the state of Oregon is well under way and expected to be completed by the end of December.

The independent study, which covers the year 2003 for which complete data is available, was contracted to ECONorthwest, a highly reputable and credible Portland-based economic research firm. All member tribes of the Oregon Gaming Alliance contributed financially to the funding of this project.

All nine gaming tribes have officially endorsed this important project and those that had casinos operating during 2003 provided data indispensable for this study to ECONorthwest.

According to ECONorthwest, almost all data needed for the study has been collected from all nine Oregon gaming tribes.

It's expected that the results of this study, which will be made available not only to the member tribes but also to the general public, will present statistically and accurately how much of an impact Indian gaming has had on Oregon's economy.

It's important to point out that the data collected is confidential. Only ECONorthwest and the individual tribe that provides the data to the firm have access to it. The compilation of the data from all nine tribes will be analyzed, the result of which will be ECONorthwest's report on the impact of tribal gaming in Oregon.

Economic Development at Governor's Summit

As a panelist on economic development at the Governor's Summit in Pendleton on Oct. 27, I took the opportunity to comment on issues involving the fee-to-trust process for economic development.

To give historical perspective to the issues involved, I stated, among other things, that

"... For a long period after the Siletz Tribe was restored 27 years ago, we had just a few parcels under trust in the town of Siletz ... the 3,600-acre reservation, which was restored to the tribe by Congress in 1980, consisted mainly of scattered mountainous parcels barely accessible, even by four-wheelers.

"... Congress, in 1994, restored to reservation status several parcels in Lincoln City, which were eligible for gaming ... Those very parcels had been allotments in trust status until several years before the tribe was hit with termination in 1954."

In fact, those parcels as well as a vast area stretching along the Oregon coast were, at one time, part of the Siletz Tribe's treaty reservation. I quoted former Sen. Mark Hatfield, who said:

"... in his statement before Congress on July 25, 1991, 'Historically, the Siletz Tribe occupied a 1.2 million-acre reservation in Western Oregon ...'"

I went on to state:

"... Today, the Siletz Tribe struggles to acquire land in trust for various tribal purposes. The fact is, as the record shows, whenever we succeeded in having land put in trust status, it has been a benefit, not a detriment, to the local governments and surrounding communities."

To paraphrase my conclusion, I said that I believe it would help if the tribe's pursuit of land in trust for economic development, housing, cultural, and other tribal purposes were seen and understood in historical perspective ... then, by facilitating the fee-to-trust process, local governments would be helping the tribe toward greater economic self-sufficiency instead of imposing impediments. This would, in turn, benefit the state, local governments, and surrounding communities.

What's New in Indian Gaming

In our neighboring states of Washington and California, important Indian gaming ballot measures were defeated in the recent general election.

In Washington, the initiative that would have allowed restaurants, race tracks, delis, card rooms, etc., to operate slots in the same way Indian casinos operate gaming machines went down by 65 percent.

In California, two propositions were defeated, Proposition 65 by a vote of more than 75 percent. If passed, Prop 65 would have forced tribes to give up 25 percent of their gaming revenues to



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the state within 30 days of passage of the proposition or face competition from private clubs, race tracks, etc.

Proposition 70, which failed by more than 70 percent, was endorsed by the California Nations Indian Gaming Association. It would have imposed on tribes corporate tax payments to the state of 8.89 percent, in exchange for which tribes would get 99-year compacts with the right to expand certain gaming activities.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger opposed both initiatives. He was opposed to Proposition 70 because he doesn't consider the proposed corporate tax rate as "fair." He has indicated his support for 25 percent as the state's "fair share."

What is happening in California is extremely disturbing. Christine Grabowski stated in *Indian Country Today* on Nov. 5, 2004:

"Since Proposition 70 failed – as it may have been destined to all along – tribes are also losers since there is no retreat from the position already endorsed and actively advanced. Tribes can then almost certainly expect that the next phase of the attack on tribal resources will be mounted. With tribal gaming effectively reduced to a state revenue stream, how soon will it be before a needy – or perhaps greedy – state government seeks to tap that resource again?"

"... As the 'fair share' language well demonstrates, tribal leaders cannot afford to be complacent. They cannot assume that the valuable resource that tribes currently enjoy and control by virtue of tribal sovereignty will not be jealously coveted by the majority society. Tribal leaders cannot assume that what rights and privileges their tribes enjoy will remain intact tomorrow."

Here in Oregon, the tribes have signed compacts with the state that include community benefit fund provisions. The difference between that and California's Prop 70 is that the gaming revenue of Oregon tribal casinos is not paid to the state as a corporate tax.

The Siletz Tribe contributes part of its gaming revenues not to the state but to charities of the tribe's choosing. Gaming funds allocated for this purpose comply with one of the five categories specified in the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act.

Occupancy at Chinook Winds Casino Resort

Once again, I am happy to say that the monthly occupancy rate of our Chinook Winds hotel has increased.

For the month of September 2003, the occupancy rate was 66 percent. Since the tribe assumed ownership, the occupancy rate for September 2004 has increased to 74 percent.

We greatly appreciate the hard work and great customer service of the Chinook Winds staff, for they have a great deal to do with increased hotel occupancy.

Get Computer Training Today

The Siletz Tribe is providing the opportunity for tribal members to take online computer classes at your own pace and in your own home.

The tribe has purchased a limited number of training subscriptions to a company called MySkillSource. More than 200 different types of computer programs can be learned.

In order to enroll, you must be an enrolled tribal member, have Internet access (the tribe does not provide Internet access), and you must send an e-mail to tinar@ctsi.nsn.us.

You will be registered for the classes and notified about how to access the program. From there, you just log on when you have time and decide which programs you would like to learn.

Classes include Word, Access, Excel, PowerPoint, and other popular software programs. You work at your own pace and individual modules allow you to return to the program for a refresher.