

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

By the time you read this issue of *Siletz News*, two significant events may have already taken place or are about to happen in November.

For one thing, the General Election on Nov. 4 will result in a new U.S. president/vice president, the election of new senators and representatives, and the enactment of numerous new and amended ballot measures.

Also during this month, we will celebrate the 31st anniversary of the Restoration of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians as a federally recognized Tribe.

But first, regarding the U.S. Congress – Nancy Pelosi, the House speaker, said it was essential that the House and Senate enact a second economic stimulus bill to extend unemployment and food stamp benefits and various other measures to reinforce the jobs market.

The Senate had already decided to call a lame duck session during the week of Nov. 17 to consider, among other items, the very complex but essential Omnibus Public Land Management Act.

Of major importance to Tribes has been – and continues to be – the reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA), which has been held up in Congress for many months and for a number of reasons, one of which has been the issue of abortion.

According to Jerry Reynolds in the Oct. 6 issue of *Indian Country Today*, "... the House leadership had decided not to offer the bill for a vote ... (because of) an amendment forbidding the use of federal funds to pay for abortion ... which had been added to the Senate version ..."

Reynolds pointed out that according to the National Indian Health Board (NIHB), Indian Tribes have had a "consistent position that abortion is inappropriate to (attach to) an Indian health bill ... already restricted under current law on federal funding ..."

Reynolds said that, "As the 110th Congress approached recess, the failure of Congress to reauthorize the IHCIA has left an angry mood among its advocates."

After all, Tribes have had a long, unsuccessful struggle to get Congress to adopt the health care bill. The National Congress of American Indians and NIHB, as well as other Tribal and inter-Tribal organizations, have vowed to continue the struggle in the new Congress.

One obstacle in the enactment of important bills, also those favorable to Indians, has been Republican filibusters. The result of the recent election will determine whether enough Democrats will have won Senate seats to be able to override Republican filibusters in the new Congress, especially when critical Indian issues are at stake.

31st Anniversary of Siletz Restoration

Regarding Restoration of our own Tribe, I would like to present in a few words some highlights of our Tribe's history:

- November is the month we celebrate the anniversary of the Confederated



Delores Pigsley

Tribes of Siletz Indians as a federally recognized Tribe.

- Although it wasn't until 31 years ago that the Confederated Tribes was recognized by the U.S. government, Oregon itself wasn't admitted into the Union as a state until 150 years ago.
- Long before we were recognized by the U.S. government 31 years ago as a federally recognized Tribe, the Siletz Tribe was a confederation of a number of sovereign Tribes and bands that existed hundreds – thousands – of years ago in our aboriginal homeland that extended over 20 million acres, ranging from Northern California to Southwest Washington state and including all of Western Oregon.
- Contrary to U.S. policy, Tribal lands were promised to settlers before treaties ceding Tribal lands to the U.S. were negotiated and settled. The incursion of settlers and the discovery of gold in the Rogue River Valley in the early 1850s brought drastic changes to the way of life that the Siletz Tribes had known since the beginning of time.
- Increasing pressure was placed on the U.S. government to remove our Native peoples to areas considered of no value to the non-Native population so land could be opened to settlers.
- Our Tribes' journey to what became the promised, permanent Coast or Siletz Reservation began as Tribes were rounded up from Northern California and Southern Oregon. A treaty was signed in 1853 at Table Rock just north of what today is Medford, Ore.
- The Rogue River War and the treaty of 1855 followed. Our ancestors began being moved to the Coast/Siletz Reservation soon after it was promised to the Tribes and established by President Franklin Pierce in November 1855 as their promised permanent reservation.
- After our people were removed to the 1.1 million-acre Coast Reservation, treaty promises were largely ignored and within 20 years more than 900,000 acres of our original reservation land

were taken away without treaty agreement or compensation.

- The allotment policies in the 1890s further reduced the Siletz Reservation lands and resulted in complex, inheritance laws, forced land sales and taxation that led to further diminishment of Tribal lands.
- Despite these devastating losses of land and resources and the resulting impacts on the traditional way of life, our people somehow survived.
- The Western Oregon Termination Act of 1954 destroyed the last of what remained of our land base.
- Still, our Siletz people and culture endured. The Tribe reorganized in the 1970s and in 1977 achieved Restoration as a federally recognized Indian Tribe by an act of Congress.
- With Restoration began decades of growth socially, physically, educationally, economically and politically as a strengthened sovereign Tribe.
- This year, the Tribe celebrates 31 years of Tribal Restoration! And in the process, we will always remember our ancestors who were forcibly removed numerous times from one place to another. We will remember the terrible march they endured from the Oregon interior to the Coast Reservation. We will remember those who suffered and died before their time.
- Our reservation now consists of more than 4,500 acres of scattered parcels of land within Lincoln County and approximately 4,000 acres of fee land. We are the largest employer in Lincoln County.
- Restoration was a blessing to the Tribe. Tribal members once again were offered health care services, education opportunities, scholarships and social programs.
- Today, we proudly leave a legacy of endurance, accomplishments and most importantly, qualities we inherited from our ancestors – our culture and spirit.

Finally, I can't conclude my chairman's report this month without telling you about the Henry M. Jackson Foundation award for distinguished Public Service that was presented to Forrest Gerard on Oct. 15 in Seattle.

According to the brochure for the event, "The foundation is proud to pay tribute to Forrest Gerard and Abraham Bergman, two visionary public servants, for their extraordinary accomplishments and service."

Dr. Abraham Bergman is described in the foundation brochure as "a pediatrician, teacher, children's advocate and community activist" who also was cited for his "contributions to the health and welfare of underserved children."

Forrest is a member of the Blackfeet Tribe of Montana. After his service with the U.S. Air Force in World War II where he flew 35 combat missions as a member of the bomber crew, Forrest entered public service in the state of Montana and then in Washington, D.C.

In 1971, he was appointed as a staff member to the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, which had legislative and oversight responsibilities over Indian affairs and was chaired by Sen. Jackson.

In 1977, the very year the Siletz Tribe was restored, President Jimmy Carter appointed Forrest to the newly created position of assistant secretary of Interior over Indian Affairs.

Charles Trimble, who during the 1970s was executive director of the National Congress of American Indians, stated in an article in the Nov. 12, 2004, issue of *Indian Country Today*, "The 1970s saw the enactment of the Indian Financing Act, the Indian Self-Determination and Educational Assistance Act, the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, the Indian Child Welfare Act, the Indian Religious Freedom Act and the Alaska Native Land Claims Act.

"The 1970s saw unprecedented return of land to the Tribes, including the sacred lands surrounding and including Blue Lake to the Taos Pueblo, Mt. Adams to the Yakama Nation and the long-awaited fulfillment of the Submarginal Lands Act."

According to Trimble, "Without unsung heroes like Forrest Gerard in key positions on Capitol Hill, much (of those landmark federal acts) would not have come about in the fashion that they did. Gerard did great work – subtly, without fanfare and too often without recognition or even thanks. His approach was honesty and directness in dealing with Indian country and he never wavered in his loyalty to the Tribes.

"In the 1976 NCAI convention in Salt Lake City, his excellent appraisal of growing anti-Indian opinion and prediction of the great white backlash helped NCAI and all Indian country prepare for it."

For those of you who don't know or remember, Forrest is no stranger to the Siletz Tribe, having played an invaluable role in the 1977 Restoration of our Tribe and since his retirement, as a Tribal consultant and friend.

I was pleased to have attended this important event in Seattle in honor of Forrest Gerard.

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Deadline for the December issue is Nov. 10. Submission of articles and photos is encouraged.



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