

Letters to the editor

Vote no

I agree with what Ginger Smith wrote in her letter of February 17.

The Chief's permanent seat guarantees each tribe will be represented on Tribal Council. To take that away would open the possibility that one tribe, maybe two, would not be represented. Each district elected their representatives. One district, maybe two, may not be represented if that is taken away.

To stagger the time people are actually sitting in Council would allow too few people to be making decisions concerning tribal business. Absolute power corrupts. There is already more than enough corruption in tribal administration. These changes would make things worse.

In my opinion Warm Springs BIA has been compromised by one person that worked in Washington, D.C. When my dad was still around, he got back from a trip to Washington, D.C. He told me that he found out this "tribal member" was trying to have our reservation terminated. So I don't trust him or anybody he may have nominated for Tribal Council.

Not much time was given from when registration cards were mailed out to the due date they had to be filled out and in to be qualified to vote.

Comments I have heard on KWSO make no sense as valid reasons for these changes. It doesn't make any sense to think nine people on Tribal Council can do a better job than 11. It would be more like a good ol' boys club. Like politicians running for office in Washington, D.C.

In my opinion these changes are wrong and not necessary.

Johnnie Simtustus.

Leadership

I'm writing this letter in light of the numerous disheartening posts, photographs and captions on these photographs of our Tribal Council members that have surface in social media.

These posts were generated from a fictitious profile, and have been viewed and shared within and outside of

our community. What I've taken from these is simply an attempt to conduct a smear campaign against our esteemed leaders, Austin, Evaline, Ray, Joe to just name a few.

This election should reflect our values as a Tribal people: dignified, respectful and truthful. The fictitious profile contains none of these values, and the person refuses to reveal their true identity.

What is clearly evident is their intent to distort uncontroverted facts of accomplishments of the Twenty-Sixth Tribal Council, and ultimately disrupt the election cycle.

What we have witnessed is a tumultuous term these last three years, seemingly created by the folly and immaturity of a few members who have made numerous claims in various media forums and social media.

These edited statements have undermined our organization, and have jeopardized the legal, fiscal and political integrity of the Tribe. This has created a daunting and at times overwhelming task for the chair, vice chair, three Chiefs and older members to maintain stability in Tribal Council chambers, sustain stable government to government relations, and our fiscal affairs. They have kept a sense of predictability to maintain the Tribes' footing.

This election cycle, it is imperative we elect members that hone decency, respect, transparency, integrity and are knowledgeable of all our documents: the 1855 Treaty, Constitution and By Laws, and Tribal Code.

I hope you all share these values and thinking when going to the polls. I for one am in full support to re-elect Austin Greene, Evaline Patt, Raymond Tsumpti Sr. as the incumbents. I also support all three Chiefs, Delvis Heath, Joe Moses and Alfred Smith Jr.

These six members are the elders of Tribal Council and possess valuable institutional knowledge and practical experience to lead the Tribe forward. Isn't it the essence of a people that we value and listen to our elders?

It seems to me a few of

the younger members of this term have lost sight of these values. The older members of Tribal Council epitomize ethical leadership, achieved consensus and lead with a stable steady hand. All key ingredients for a smooth and successful organization.

These were the cornerstones of Tribal Council in the 1980's and 90's. Let's continue on that path for good leadership and support Austin Greene, Raymond Tsumpti Sr. and Evaline Patt in their reelection bid and I also encourage you to write-in Frederick 'Duran' Bobb for Simnasho District.

Floyd Calica

Referendum

First, I appreciate Johnnie Simtustus' letter. He has wise words. Those of us who know tribal history know the Simtustus family descended from a long line of hereditary chiefs who contributed to our reservation's development.

BIA's Secretarial Election on Constitutional amendments is April 11. Hopefully we will have a good voter turnout. Many non-resident voters did not receive a voter registration form in time to meet the registration deadline.

The statement, "There is no minimum requirement regard the number of registered voters," is questionable. An election as important as amending a major document should have more stringent requirements than a random number of voters. It is questionable if the required number (one-third) of qualified tribal member voters has called for the referendum.

Once the election takes place, it must have 30 percent of those entitled (and registered) to vote do vote. The amendment is decided by majority (51 percent or more) vote. The referendum question is to be posted in public places by April 1, 2016; so watch for it to know what you're voting on. In doing simple math there are 973 registered voters. Of the 973, thirty percent (324) must vote. Outcome is decided by 51 percent of the 324, or 165. This is off the top of my head, so feel free to check its correctness.

Sorry, I have no flowery words for you because the Wasco way is to just get your point across (get 'er done) with no frills. It's vitally important that voters understand what they're voting on. Okay, let's get to the basic. I have heard many young people say they have been told this referendum is being held to lower the voting age to 18... Not so. If you are 18 years or older, you already are entitled to vote, provided you registered in time. Don't be misled by people who want to change our laws to profit themselves. Don't get confused about who can vote in Council elections. The Constitution says either sex, married, or 21 years of age, etc. That's the difference between voting age for Secretarial Elections (18 or over), and voting age for Council elections (21 or married).

More basics: Our law states, "No person shall represent the Confederated Tribes on the Tribal Council unless he (she) is a duly enrolled member of the community who has attained the age of 21 years, and who has never been convicted of a major crime." The nominations have already been held for all three districts. In our current status, it's important that whoever is your choice, that person be very conscientious of our bottom line. This means being innovative in ways to save, and creative about spending and always keeping ROI (return on investment) in mind. Spend funds only in ways that yield returns. A Council member once elected becomes a public servant and time that once was theirs no longer belongs to them, but to the people they serve. A Council member is accountable to all three tribes since we are confederated, and to the people who voted for and elected him or her.

Seasoned rancher mentoring new tribal rancher

by Jo Lynne Seuffer
USDA Risk
Management Agency

Nestled on the Yakama Indian Reservation, 140 miles southeast of Seattle on the eastern slope of the Cascade Range Mountains along the Yakima River, Shawna Kalama is living her dream.

Shawna, a member of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, is a beginning rancher.

Over the past several years, Shawna has successfully leveraged USDA programs to support both her entrepreneurial education goals and her growing livestock operation.

Pursuing a Business Degree, Shawna is currently attending Heritage University in Toppenish.

Along with that busy schedule, she has established a cattle ranching operation.

Mike Shellenberger with Intertribal Ag Council assisted Shawna in obtaining a micro-loan from USDA's Farm Service Agency in 2013.

Shawna manages a cow/calf operation that currently has 30 cows (red and black Angus), 10 calves and two registered Angus bulls.

In three years of operation, Shawna has established a direct market for her cattle through the Real Food Buying Club of Seattle. With demand for her beef, Shawna calves year round to ensure her quality beef is available every month.

Recently, her Business 101 Class, led by Profes-



Courtesy Jo Lynne Seuffer

Mike Shellenberger and Shawna Kalama.

or Leonard Black, included hands-on instruction using USDA's Risk Management Agency's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) guidance brochure.

"The SWOT analysis provided everyone in our class who are, or hope to be involved in a business enterprise," said Shawna. "It helped me to gain insights into the past and think of possible solutions to existing or potential problems, such as managing devastating risks like bears that have killed some of my herd."

Utilizing those methods, Shawna took advantage of an opportunity—ideas on how to overcome weaknesses and build on strengths—and met with James McCuen from the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation.

James is a lifetime, seasoned tribal rancher who grew up on the Colville Reservation in the Kartar Valley. James is also the Pacific Northwest Chairman of the IAC and recently retired from the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

"I live every day, carrying-forward my grandpar-

ents and parents' goals to sustain the viability of our native lands," said McCuen. "Seeing our younger tribal members follow in these footsteps as Native American farmers and ranchers is truly a dream come true."

James shared with Shawna information about IAC's Marketing Development Program, American Indian Foods and advice on registering and securing her business domain name through IAC's "Made/Produced by American Indians" trademark. This allows for certification as authentic American Indian products, with enforcement by the U.S. Patent Office.

These two energized ranchers plan to stay in touch. They know firsthand they are part of Indian Country's generations past and generations to come.

And they take seriously the role to ensure Indian agriculture continues to respect culture, self and sacred lands for years to come.

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You may have reviewed the mailout. What the proposed amendments do is basically weaken a major document. Everyone who is eligible to vote would have to register for every Council election. We have had Chiefs hundreds of years and Warm Springs is one only a handful of tribes who still recognize and respect its Chiefs. An amendment would eliminate them from serving on our governing

body. The proposed impeachment law would allow the Council to do so by a 2/3 vote, after being recalled by only 30 percent of the voters of the district voters who elected him or her (as compared to a fair 51 percent).

Apportionment eliminates the districts. Since Agency District has the most voters come election time, Simnasho and Seekseequa stand to lose representation and a voice on Council.

The Officer's proposed amendment does not offer enough information. It appears that the chairman, vice-chairman, secretary-treasurer and committee members must meet qualifications (what are they, besides what's stated in the Constitution?) through the tribal personnel salary program. So that brings up the question of how will we pay for this change? This may be a good question to ask of the originators of proposed changes, or Council candidates recently nominated. It sounds spendy. Can we afford it? Will it be funded by the line item in the tribal budget under Council and Committees?

If an applicant/candidate doesn't meet proposed education requirements, maybe they exceed qualification by public service experience, or making important well-informed decisions or just plain good old common sense.

Our reservation has long been known for leaders with substance, integrity and wisdom, so we need to stay close to those attributes as possible. Are we trying to switch our Tribal Council form a legislative body to more of executive one instead? Both?

Should the measure pass, there's the potential problem with voting within Council if we go to a nine-member body. One of the nine serves as chairman, leaving the votes probable. It's kinda like the predicament with loss of Justice Scalia from the Supreme Court.

My take on this election is that we may be stuck with a "watered down" version of our Constitution and By-Laws. If the amendments pass and are implemented, what happens if we don't want to, or can't adjust to them? My guess is another election about 80 years down the road to repeal. It will take several generations to undo a bad decision. Descendant grandchildren and great grandchildren as adults will be asking how such laws got on the books.

My advice as an elder is to ask questions and gather as much information as possible from credible sources before voting. Remember, we have to live with our decisions.

Ginger Smith, Wasco Elder.

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