

Special BIA Election



PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

On January 27, 1999 the Grand Ronde Tribal Council passed Resolution No. 005-99 asking for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to conduct a vote of the Grand Ronde tribal membership to amend the Tribe's Constitution, with regard to enrollment requirements. This process is permitted under Article II, Section 1(e) of the Tribal Constitution and federal law.

1. What are the current enrollment requirements under the Tribal Constitution?

Tribal membership is currently available to all persons who are not members of another federally recognized tribe, band, or community and:

- Who are listed on the official tribal membership roll prepared under the Restoration Act; or
- Who file for membership and meet the following requirements:
 - a. Are a descendent of a member of the Grand Ronde Tribe (descent means lineal decent from any ancestor on the tribal rolls); and
 - b. Have one-sixteenth (1/16) or more degree of Indian Blood of any federally recognized tribe(s);
 - c. Are accepted as members pursuant to the Tribal Enrollment Ordinance.

2. What would the enrollment requirements be if the Tribal Constitution is amended as a result of this election?

Tribal membership would be available to all persons who are not members of another federally recognized tribe, band, or community and who for one year have fully and unconditionally relinquished membership in another Indian tribe and;

1. Who are listed under the official tribal membership roll prepared under the Restoration Act; or
2. Who are listed on the current tribal membership roll; or
3. Who file for membership and meet the following requirements:
 - a. Have one-sixteenth (1/16) or more degree Grand Ronde Blood (Grand Ronde Blood is defined as all Indian blood derived from a direct ancestor who is on the tribal roll prepared under the Restoration Act);
 - b. Whose parent(s) was a tribal member at the time of applicant's birth and at the time of application for enrollment, unless deceased; and
 - c. Are accepted as a member pursuant to the Tribal Enrollment Ordinance.

3. How would this amendment change the enrollment requirements?

1. Applicants who wish to relinquish from another tribe and enroll in the Grand Ronde Tribe would be required to be relinquished from another tribe for one full year before they could apply for membership in the Grand Ronde Tribe.
2. Applicants would no longer be able to count the Indian blood they have from non-Grand Ronde ancestors. (For example, if mother is Grand Ronde tribal member and father is Spokane tribal member, only the mother's Indian blood would be counted).
3. Applicants must be born to a parent who was already a member at the time of his/her birth and at the time an application for membership is filed, unless the parent is deceased.

4. What will this amendment do if it is passed?

The likely result of this amendment will be a reduction in the number of new tribal members. Some applicants for membership into the Tribe, who may meet the current enrollment requirements, may not meet the amended requirements. If passed, this amendment will not affect tribal members who are currently enrolled.

5. When will this special election be held?

The Bureau of Indian Affairs, Siletz Agency office, will be conducting this election on behalf of the Grand Ronde Tribe. The election date is July 27, 1999.

6. What is the process for conducting a BIA election?

All eligible Grand Ronde tribal members will be notified through mail when this election will be held. You will be able to vote by mail, and will receive a Voter's Pamphlet from the BIA in the mail. Even if you are already registered to vote in Tribal Council elections, you must register with the BIA to vote in this special election. All tribal members 18 years of age or older are eligible to vote. All information on how to register will be in the pamphlet.

7. I will turn 18 years old this year. Can I vote in this election?

If you will be 18 years of age by the date of the election, you will receive the same information in the mail as everyone else, and will be eligible to vote in this election.

8. Is there anything about voting in this election I need to pay careful attention to?

Yes. When you register and vote by mail, your signature has to be the exact name that is printed on the Voter's Pamphlet. For example, "Mary Margaret Jones" would have to sign that exact name, not "Mary M. Jones" or "Mrs. M. Jones." All names have to be signed EXACTLY as the BIA has them, which is how they will appear on the ballot packages, or they will not be counted. Your pamphlet will contain instructions on how to register and vote. It is also important to remember that you must register with the BIA to vote in this election, even if you are a registered voter with the Tribe.

9. What does it take for this amendment to pass?

To pass, at least 30% of the BIA registered voters must vote in the election, and of those, at least two-thirds must vote to approve the change. It is not like the Tribal Council elections, where the most votes wins. For example, if there are 1,100 BIA registered voters, and 650 vote to pass the amendment, while 450 vote to keep the enrollment requirements as they are, the amendment would not pass. Two-thirds of 1,100 is 733. So even though the amendment received a full 200 more votes, it still didn't receive enough votes required to pass.

10. What is going to happen next?

Several things will happen in the next few weeks. Even though the BIA is running this election, the Tribal Council has selected four people to serve on a special board to review the election process and work with the BIA. The special election board has set July 27, 1999 as the date of this election. Over the next few months the board will:

- Prepare a Voter's Pamphlet and registration form which will be sent to eligible tribal members on May 3, 1999.
- Post a list of registered voters for the special BIA election in 3 to 4 places for 20 days starting on June 7, 1999 (anyone who is registered, but not on the list, can challenge the list, but the last day to challenge will be June 18, 1999).

11. What happens after the list of registered voters is posted?

- Official ballots and instructions are mailed to everyone on the list on June 25, 1999.
- Ballots must be mailed or hand-delivered to the BIA Siletz Agency Office by July 27, 1999. (Siletz Agency Office is the local BIA office serving Grand Ronde, Siletz, and Coquille tribes.)
- Ballots are counted by the special election board/committee.
- Election results are posted for three (3) days (challenges to the results can be made to the BIA Siletz Agency).
- The election results are then forwarded to BIA headquarters, and the BIA must approve or disapprove the amendment (if passed) within 45 days.
- The Constitutional Amendment (if passed) is effective on the day it is approved by the BIA.

If you have any questions regarding this special election, please contact the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Siletz Agency Office at (541) 444-2679 and ask to speak with Ron Kortlever or Mary Bartels.