

Hatfield Fellow dazzles Congress with talents

U.S. Rep. David Wu's office woos Dennis Worden to accept full-time legislative assistant position

By Angie Sears

Smoke Signals staff writer

Dennis Worden, a Coeur d'Alene Tribe member, has been so impressive that he has turned a temporary assignment — being the 2006-07 Hatfield Fellow in Oregon Congressman David Wu's office — into a full-time job in Washington, D.C.

"I felt very fortunate to receive the fellowship," Worden said. "I was in a position of already being in an office and had an opportunity to stay. I think that being in the fellowship and having established a relationship with the office definitely helped me."

The 23-year-old Fellow now is a full-time legislative assistant for Wu.

Kris Pratt, Wu's legislative director, said that her experiences working with Worden were incredibly positive.

Pratt said Worden has gained more responsibilities as a permanent staffer, but she is not sure that her expectations of him have changed due to the high quality of work he has always delivered as a Fellow.

"Dennis has an incredible ability to learn and obtain information like legislative process and procedure, which can be really arcane," Pratt said.

"Lots of folks don't learn it while they're up here; they just kind of skim by, but he wants to know, and knows everything. He is really is an amazing guy."

"In Congress he's been very good with creating ideas that help Oregon and Tribes back home as well. He's a really good generator of great ideas. And many of his ideas have passed; they're now in bills and things like that."

Wu represents Oregon's First Congressional District, which includes territory from Portland to the Oregon coast.

Worden is the eighth Fellow to complete the program. He focused on Indian affairs, agriculture, telecommunications and foreign affairs.

Worden said one of the highlights of his fellowship experience on Capitol Hill was helping to draft a resolution acknowledging the 50th anniversary of the flooding of Celilo Falls on the Columbia River.

Worden said he was particularly proud because he drafted the resolution's language and Wu's floor statement. The resolution passed the House of Representatives by a voice vote.

The Mark O. Hatfield Fellowship, established by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and Spirit Mountain Community Fund, is a tribute to Hatfield for his accomplishments as Oregon's governor and U.S. senator.

The purpose of the fellowship is threefold: To provide opportunities for growth and development for young Native Americans who wish to learn about the political system at a federal level in Washington, D.C.; to provide a congressional



Photo courtesy of Dennis Worden

Dennis Worden

liaison for Oregon Tribes who can produce long-term benefits for Native Americans and the Pacific Northwest, while seeding Indian Country with knowledgeable and capable Native Americans; and to provide members of Congress with an opportunity to better understand the culture, heritage and needs of Native people.

"Dennis Worden is a shining example of how the Hatfield Fellowship can work to benefit Indian Country as well as the federal government," said Shelley Hanson, director of Spirit Mountain Community Fund.

"After serving nine months in the program, working in Congressman Wu's office, Dennis was a valuable asset."

"He was continually approached with job opportunities, but the one he selected was to stay working with Congressman Wu and his staff."

"This is a strong testament to Dennis' skills and abilities, and is an excellent reflection of how the fellowship is an entrée to an excellent opportunity."

Worden received support from Spirit Mountain Community Fund staff, as well as the Grand Ronde Tribal Council and members of his family during the fellowship. He said he was thankful to those who supported him through a trying but rewarding experience, and would like to offer future Fellows advice.

"Working hard while in the fellowship is very important because you are representing yourself, but you are also representing Spirit Mountain Community Fund and Tribes of Oregon in general," he said.

"You have a lot to achieve and there is a certain level of performance you should work for. So I think working hard is number one. Be willing to listen to people, learn from people and watch other people because there's a lot to learn."

"Even after transitioning to a staff position, I still have a lot to learn about the process; there are people I still meet and things I still need to learn about. ..."

"Never feel that sitting down and learning from someone is beyond you." ■

Expansion Increases Casino Parking

CASINO continued
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In response to a Tribal member's question, Rhode said that even though the new Playworld is in a separate building, parents in the casino can still check on their children by going to a security station and viewing their children via closed-circuit TV. Having Playworld in a separate building also moves children away from the gambling environment and cigarette smoke, and it is guarded 24 hours a day by a security guard, he said.

Rhode said that the southern expansion will increase the casino's parking by 700 spaces to 3,600. He also said that the expansion will not substantially increase casino employment because people will be "changing hats" and moving around.

Currently, Rhode said, the casino employs 129 Tribal members and 40 percent — 52 — are in professional or leadership positions.

After the southern expansion is complete, Rhode said casino management will look at moving the arcade to the events center to

create a youth activity area, turning the old buffet site into gaming and remodeling the gift shops. Still undetermined, he added, is what to do with the current Legends restaurant site.

The main contractor on the southern expansion is S.D. Deacon of Portland.

Tribal Finance Officer Larry Kovach also gave a presentation on the Tribal Endowment and Tribal Reserve. Since it also dealt with financial matters, the presentation was held in executive session and cannot be reported in *Smoke Signals*.

Kovach said the presentation's slides will appear in the Tribal Council's November edition of *Tilixam Wawa*.

Door prizes winners were Jody McCue, Buddy White and Jim Bigoni, \$50; and Gloria Engelson, \$100. Elders' Committee raffle winners were Denise Harvey, Cookie Jensen, Ruby Bigoni, Reyn Leno, Carinna Kistler-Ginter, Engelson and Barbara Feehan.

The next General Council meeting will be held 11 a.m. Sunday, Nov. 4, in the Tribal Community Center in Grand Ronde. ■

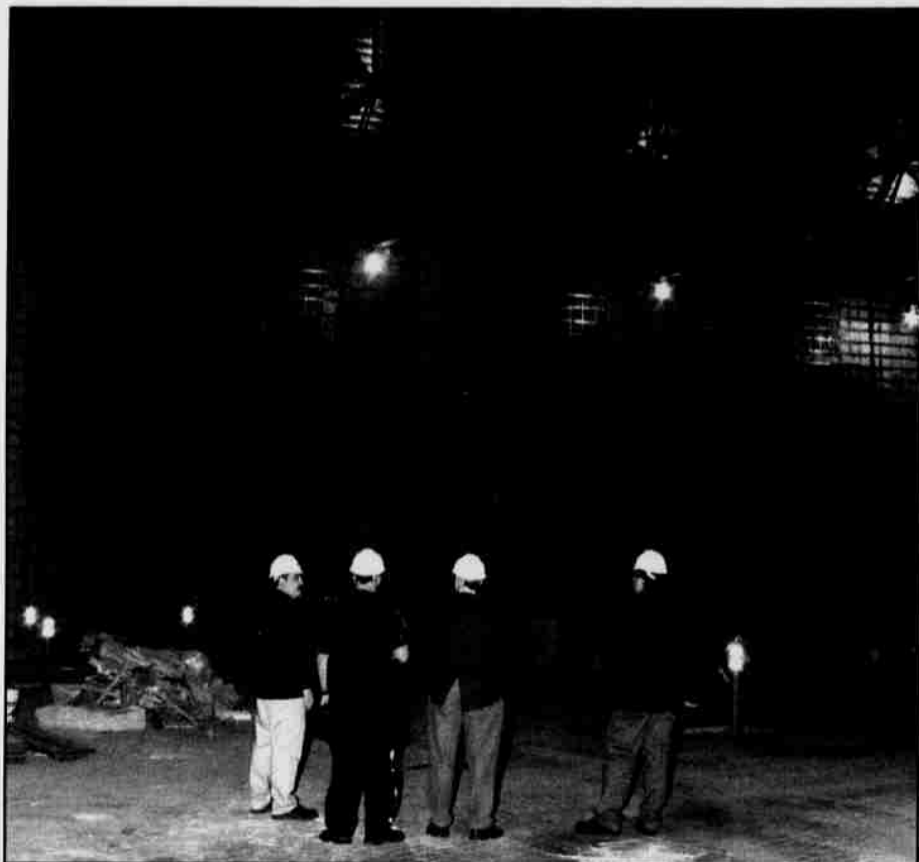


Photo by Toby McClary

Spirit Mountain Casino Facilities Director Ron Reibach, left, gives members of the Polk County Sheriff's Office a tour of the new events center, which is still under construction.