

Letters

Dear Tribal members:

I hope many of you have been following the recent demonstrations in Iran. The people there are marching for such basic human rights as the freedom of speech, the freedom of press and the freedom of expression. It is truly amazing to observe what people will do for their freedom. Now consider this.

In Grand Ronde, we may be having our freedoms taken from us. Let me explain.

In the last *Smoke Signals*, a nonprofit organization for which I volunteer paid for a small 2-inch-by-2-inch advertisement on page 7 that simply stated "want change?" and our Web site. It did not mention names, nor even say anything overtly "political." Yet within a day Tribal Council passed a Record of Instruction to bar any further "political" advertisements. I received an e-mail from Editor Dean Rhodes stating that *Smoke Signals* would not be able to run any more advertisements for our organization, even though we had paid for them in advance. He offered a refund.

We were hoping to announce to all Tribal members that we will host three different Candidates Forums for you all to meet Tribal Council candidates, since the Tribe no longer hosts them. We were hoping you all would visit our Web site to hear a different perspective on the way the Tribe is being run. We were hoping that our Tribe was a place that would encourage debate and the exchange of ideas. We were hoping to add a new dimension to Tribal elections that has been missing.

I find it sad that any other paper in the United States would accept a paid advertisement — note that paid advertisements help offset some of the cost of our paper — without so much as a question, but our Tribal newspaper says no because Tribal Council tells them to. More to the point, I am perplexed as to what motivates this newfound desire to start censoring the *Smoke Signals* for items deemed "political." Last year I seem to recall a series of letters for and against then presidential candidate Barack Obama. I also seem to remember last year's Leno Letter sparked a number of letters to the editor, the whole discussion around something that most people would probably consider "political." Lastly, as recent as the last few months, a full-page ad appeared in *Smoke Signals* urging Tribal members to vote in a local election. Hmmmm ... "vote," "election," isn't that what one might call "political"? Yet our leaders never saw fit to interfere with any of that ... until now.

Let me end this letter with this historical observation: Governments that suddenly seize control of the media, especially on the verge of elections, have rarely had the best interests of their citizens in mind, which is why such acts have been more common during Latin American military coups, in former Soviet Republics and places like Iran. Freedom of the press is, along with the right to vote, one of the defining characteristics of democracy. I hope our Tribal leaders remember that.

Sincerely, but disappointed,
Bryan Mercier
Roll #1357

(Editor's note: Tribal Council issued a Record of Instruction on June 17 that temporarily halted the running of political advertisements or notices from a group or individual in Smoke Signals "until the Tribal Council has had time to discuss the issue further and standard policy is established." Tribal Council discussed the issue on June 26 and did not reach a majority consensus on the issue, meaning that Smoke Signals can continue running ads and letters to the editor that qualify under the Editorial Policy by not being slanderous, libelous or attacking individuals.)

See page 10 for more letters.

CORRECTION: A Letter to the Editor published in the June 15, 2009, *Smoke Signals* edition on page 10 incorrectly described the process for investigation of alleged ethical misconduct under the Tribal Ethical Standards Ordinance. We believe it is important to provide the correct process under Tribal law. A sworn complaint alleging improper conduct by an official under the ordinance may be filed with the Tribal Council Secretary (or alternatively Tribal Chairperson) with a copy to the Tribal Attorney (or alternatively the Assistant Tribal Attorney). This mirrors the service requirements under the Tort Claims Ordinance for actions filed in Tribal Court. Once the complaint is filed, Tribal Council appoints a Hearings Officer to investigate and hold hearings on the allegation — historically they have been legally trained mediators or judges with no connection to the Tribe. It is the independent Hearings Officer who determines if ethical violations have occurred and recommends appropriate sanctions. Tribal Council must accept the findings and conclusions of the Hearings Officer.

Tribal Office Closures

Tribal offices will be closing at noon Thursday, July 2, and be closed on Friday, July 3, in observance of Independence Day.

NOTICE — Monthly Tribal Council Wednesday Meetings

DATE	TIME
Wednesday, July 1	5 p.m.
Wednesday, July 8	5 p.m.
Wednesday, July 22	*5:30 p.m.

**(Later time to accommodate those members of Council returning from off-site meetings)*

Please note that these times and dates are subject to change if needed. Call Dakota Whitecloud, Tribal Council Relations Coordinator, at 503-879-1309 to confirm.

Smoke Signals

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DEADLINE DATE	ISSUE DATE
Monday, July 6	JULY 15
Monday, July 20	AUG. 1
Wednesday, Aug. 5	AUG. 15
Thursday, Aug. 20	SEPT. 1
Thursday, Sept. 3	SEPT. 15

Editorial Policy

SMOKE SIGNALS, a publication of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon, is published twice a month. No portion of this publication may be reprinted without permission.

Our editorial policy is intended to encourage input from Tribal members and readers about stories printed in the Tribal newspaper. However, all letters received must be signed by the author, an address must be given and a phone number or e-mail address must be included for verification purposes. Full addresses and phone numbers will not be published unless requested.

SMOKE SIGNALS reserves the right to edit letters and to refuse letters that are determined to contain libelous statements or personal attacks on individuals, staff, Tribal administration or Tribal Council. Not all letters are guaranteed publication upon submission. Letters to the editor are the opinions and views of the writer. Published letters do not necessarily reflect the opinions of **SMOKE SIGNALS**, Tribal staff, Tribal administration or Tribal Council.

Members of: ■ Native American Journalists Association
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