

# Tribe seeks amendment to Oregon bill regarding veterans

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

SALEM – Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno and Veterans Special Event Board Chairman Steve Bobb Sr. testified before the House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness on Thursday, May 4, seeking an amendment to a Senate bill that would require better cultural competency for Tribal veterans' representatives accredited by the federal government.

The bill was approved 30-0 by the Oregon Senate. It recognizes the service of Native American veterans and requires the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs to assist with programs overseen by the state's nine federally recognized Tribes and federal accreditation of Tribal veterans' representatives.

The requested amendment would insert language that requires "employees, agents and representatives of the Department of Veterans' Affairs who provide aid and assistance to a Tribe consult with appropriate officials and members of the Tribe as to the needs of Native American veterans within the Tribe, and approach the provision of aid and assistance to the Tribe with an understanding of cultural values and practices regarding Native American veterans who are members of the Tribe."

Leno and Bobb were accompanied by Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs Director Cameron Smith.

"We created a curriculum," Leno

*According to the committee's staff summary, there are more than 100,000 Tribal members in Oregon and approximately 3,800 of them are veterans.*



Reyn Leno



Steve Bobb Sr.

testified. "I don't know how many people know that. Grand Ronde stepped up and we created a curriculum for education in schools about the nine Tribes in Oregon to be taught. In that process, we bring teachers out to the Tribe and we teach them how to teach that curriculum.

"As a veteran, I believe if you are going to have success with these people going out to the Tribes, they need to understand the culture of the Tribes because if you don't understand that, it's not going to be successful.

"In the Tribal culture, it goes to the question of how do you get veterans to come in and ask for that service? That is a very dif-

ficult question. ... In the Tribal environment, it's about families coming. I actually went and looked for services. I would have never done it had my wife, my kids, my grandkids not pushed me to do that because in the belief of veterans there is always somebody that needs it more than you. We believe

one of the answers to your question is you need to get these families involved ... if not that veteran will sit home and go without that service believing there's another veteran needing that service."

Bobb echoed Leno's sentiments about veteran thinking when it comes to requesting their earned U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs services.

"Warriors do not live with the feeling of being owed," Bobb said. "Therefore, their contributions to the peace and the freedom of this nation that we all love so very much, surely the care of all those that have served should be on an equal level."

Leno said cultural training for

Tribal veterans' representatives could be held in Grand Ronde, just like the Tribe offers for Oregon teachers.

Committee Chairman Paul Evans, a Democrat from Monmouth, said, "Keep talking. We like the way the amendment is going. A way to move this bill that had a 30-0 vote in the Senate, has agreement among the agencies and the Tribes is something that we want to assist in and move forward."

"Without the amendment in our Native ways ... if a person out there is just going to sit in his office and wait for a veteran to walk in the door and say 'I need help,' it's not going to happen," Leno said. "He needs to be open to his Tribal family. That family can actually be people who aren't even related to him who actually come in and say, 'I got this veteran. He needs help.' I think that is the purpose of this amendment, to make sure that we get these people aware of our culture and history."

Leno and Bobb, who are both Vietnam War-era Marine Corps veterans, said they are in favor of Senate Bill 80 with the proposed amendment.

According to the committee's staff summary, there are more than 100,000 Tribal members in Oregon and approximately 3,800 of them are veterans.

"Another way to get veterans in the door is reduce the paperwork," Leno said. ■

## Memorial Day Observance



MONDAY, MAY 29

Meal served at noon  
Program begins at 1 P.M.

9615 Grand Ronde Road  
Grand Ronde, OR 97347

For more information about the Memorial Day event,  
call: Steve Bobb Sr. 503-876-3118 or e-mail: [chelsea.clark@grandronde.org](mailto:chelsea.clark@grandronde.org)

