

Tuomi continues push for stable police funding

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Tribal Council member Brenda Tuomi continued the Grand Ronde Tribe's push for equitable and stable federal funding of law enforcement, particularly for Terminated Tribes, during a U.S. Department of Justice consultation session held in Washington, D.C., on Thursday, Feb. 15.

The Tribal Funding Policy consultation was held in conjunction with the National Congress of American Indians' Tribal Nations Policy Summit that was held Feb. 12-15 in the nation's capital as well.

Tuomi was accompanied by Tribal Attorney Rob Greene and Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Hernandez.

Tuomi's testimony continues Grand Ronde's lobbying efforts for law enforcement funding from the federal government. Previously, then-Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno testified before the U.S. House Committee for Appropriations' Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies in May 2017 on the same topic.

In a prepared statement released to *Smoke Signals*, Tuomi said that Tribal police forces are "grossly underfunded" and that Tribes nationwide are suffering from "staggering violent crime and victimization rates."

For the Grand Ronde Tribe, the issue revolves around Termination, which occurred in 1954 and was not resolved until Restoration occurred in November 1983.

"Grand Ronde believes change is needed to level the playing field between restored Tribes in Public Law 280 jurisdictions and those who are not facing the challenges



"The Tribe is in dire need of sustainable base funding that it can rely on in the long term to plan appropriately for the needs of the department and the Tribal community."

~ Tribal Council member Brenda Tuomi

of rebuilding their Tribal governments after years of Termination or non-recognition," Tuomi testified.

Public Law 280 is a federal statute enacted by Congress in 1953 that enabled states to assume criminal, as well as civil, jurisdiction in matters involving Native Americans as litigants on Reservation lands.

On the reservations to which it applied, Public Law 280 took away the federal government's authority to prosecute Indian Country crimes. It also authorized the states of Alaska, California, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oregon and Wisconsin to prosecute most crimes that occurred in Indian Country.

Tuomi outlined the Tribe's law enforcement history since Restoration. In 1997, the Grand Ronde Tribe entered into an enhanced service agreement with the Polk County Sheriff's Office because of the Tribe's remote location and slow police response. The Tribe, through Spirit Mountain Community Fund grants, allocated more than \$6 million for increased coverage in the area between 1997 and 2014.

In 2011, the Grand Ronde Tribe started its own police department, assuming primary responsibility for law enforcement in the Grand Ronde area. Upon the passage of

Oregon Senate Bill 412, Tribal police officers took on state law enforcement powers as well.

Tuomi said that the Tribe's current police budget is approximately \$1.1 million and the Tribe funds almost 60 percent of that total.

"The Tribe is able to direct some Tribal housing dollars to law enforcement, but this draws funds away from much-needed housing programs," she said. "We've also been able to secure some competitive grants, like those available through Department of Justice programs. This is not a sustainable strategy for the Tribe, especially considering budget shortfalls and other funding limitations."

"The Tribe is in dire need of sustainable base funding that it can rely on in the long term to plan appropriately for the needs of the department and the Tribal community."

Tuomi said that because of the lack of sustainable funding, the Grand Ronde Tribe has not been able to add a forest officer to patrol the Tribe's timberlands or implement technological upgrades, such as electronic ticketing, replacing old equipment or maintaining police vehicles.

"The Tribe would like to, but has been unable to, increase programs such as reserve officers, additional cooperative opportunities with local jurisdictions to combat drugs and other crimes, and other community outreach because participation in such programs requires funding we do not have," Tuomi said.

Tuomi said that protecting public safety on Tribal lands is part of the

federal government's trust responsibility, but that available funding for that responsibility is "grossly inadequate."

For instance, the Bureau of Indian Affairs' own 2016 report to Congress said that base law enforcement services in Indian Country requires \$1 billion in funding, but that the available funding only meets 20 percent of that need.

And, Tuomi said, the BIA does not recognize its federal responsibility to fund Tribes, such as Grand Ronde, that are in Public Law 280 states like Oregon.

"Due to the unavailability of guaranteed federal funding for public safety, Tribal governments like Grand Ronde apply for public safety grants – primarily those from the Department of Justice," Tuomi said. "These funds have helped, but they are neither reliable nor sufficient. Not only do these types of grants pit Tribes against each other, they limit how funds can be used. ... Tribes need to be able to determine their own law enforcement priorities through stable base operations funding."

In addition to asking the Department of Justice to re-evaluate its funding structure, Tuomi said the Tribe has applied and been denied BIA funding and advocated on the congressional level for language to be inserted into the Department of the Interior's Senate Appropriations Bill that would require the BIA to evaluate the policing challenges that restored Tribes face in obtaining funding.

"In closing, Tribal police forces are grossly underfunded and Tribes nationwide are suffering from staggering violent crime and victimization rates," Tuomi said. "PL 280 Tribes and those facing the challenges of Termination and Restoration are disproportionately impacted by this underfunding. When determining how to best allocate its funds, the Tribe asks that increased and targeted funding for those Tribes be given a high priority." ■

Spruce Root Clam Baskets

Instructors Margaret Mathewson and Greg Archuleta

Learn how to prepare materials and weave a Spruce Root Clam Basket.

WHERE: CTGR Portland Office 4445 SW Barbur Blvd Portland, OR 97239

WHEN: SATURDAY MARCH 10TH, 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
SUNDAY MARCH 11TH, 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM



Space is limited to sign-up contact:
Greg Archuleta at: archuletagreg@gmail.com

Now Available
Diabetic Foot Care
by trained nursing staff

Call Medical today to schedule an appointment
503-879-2002