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BEGINS MARCH 13, 2022

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2 a.m. Sunday, March 13



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SMOKE SIGNALS

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AN INDEPENDENT PUBLICATION OF THE CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF GRAND RONDE · SMOKE SIGNALS.ORG

Casino, Tribe prepare for end of mask mandate

By Danielle Harrison

Smoke Signals staff writer

Starting as early as Saturday, March 12, guests and employees at Spirit Mountain Casino will no longer be required to wear a mask inside the gaming facility.

In updated guidance released Thursday, Feb. 24, the Oregon Health Authority announced that Oregon will lift mask requirements for indoor public places and schools by Saturday, March 12, citing projected hospitalizations to reach levels below those at the start of the Omicron surge.

Originally, the Health Authority had projected March 31 as the end date for the statewide mask rule.

After the mandate ends, the decision to mask will be left up to individual employers, including mask requirements inside schools, but it doesn't affect medical facilities and associated services.

However, Tribal governmental employees will have to continue wearing masks when they return to work on Monday, March 14.

"When it comes to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Tribe has always chosen to err on the side of

caution," Tribal Communications Director Sara Thompson said. "As a result, we are leaving our mask mandate in place for now. We will continue to monitor our situation and re-evaluate the mask mandate accordingly."

At Spirit Mountain Casino, employees are required to be fully vaccinated and boosted against COVID-19. The Tribal government does not have a vaccine mandate except for clinic, housekeep-

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Kennedy testifies before Senate to update '80s consent decree

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy testified virtually before the U.S. Senate's Indian Affairs Committee on Wednesday, Feb. 16, in the Grand Ronde Tribe's continuing efforts to update the mid-1980s consent decree that limits Tribal hunting and fishing rights.



Cheryle A. Kennedy

Ostensibly, Kennedy testified in support of Senate Bill 3126 introduced by Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley on Nov. 1, 2021, as well as expressed support for a companion bill that would do the same for the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians.

"These agreements have provisions in them that prohibit any amendments or modifications," Kennedy said. "These two bills simply authorize a process to permit Grand Ronde and Siletz to amend these older agreements and negotiate updated hunting and fishing arrangements that meet the needs of both the state of Oregon and the Tribes."

Kennedy's Senate testimony follows on the heels of publishing an op-ed in *The Oregonian* newspaper in November in which she called the consent decree "unjust."

Merkley's bill would allow the Grand Ronde Tribe and the state of Oregon to replace, amend or oth-

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All-Kowing exhibit



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

From left, Professor Brian Winkenweder, chair of the Linfield University Art Department, and University President Dr. Miles Davis interact with "Sea of Kienholz" during a reception for Tribal Elder Frank Kowing's "Breathing the High-altitude Ether of Discovery" exhibit at the Linfield University Gallery in McMinnville on Wednesday, Feb. 16. Kowing walked on in September 2016 and was one of the first Linfield University studio art graduates. The exhibit will be open until Friday, March 18. To see more photos from the reception, turn to page 8.

Racing Commission denies proposed gaming plans at Grants Pass racetrack

By Danielle Harrison

Smoke Signals staff writer

SALEM – The Oregon Racing Commission voted unanimously on Thursday, Feb. 17, to deny TMB Racing 225 slot machine-like historic horse racing machines at the planned Flying Lark entertainment complex adjoining the racetrack at the Josephine County Fairgrounds in Grants Pass.

The decision was largely based on an opinion by the

Oregon Department of Justice which categorically states that TMB Racing's plan violates the Oregon constitutional prohibition against casinos.

"We determine that the machines are games of chance that do not afford players any meaningful opportunity to exercise skill," states the opinion written by Chief Coun-

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