

May 20, 2016

Mr. Lawrence Roberts  
Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs  
Indian Affairs  
MS-3642-MIB  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Mr. Stanley Speaks  
Northwest Regional Director  
Bureau of Indian Affairs, Northwest Region  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
911 Northeast 11th Avenue  
Portland, OR 97232-4169

Re: Coquille Tribe's Medford Casino Project

Dear Assistant Secretary Roberts and Director Speaks:

I write to you regarding the Coquille Tribe's Medford Casino Project to provide my views and some context having served as Governor of Oregon during the early years of Indian gaming in our state. I am deeply concerned by the Coquille Tribe's attempt to open a casino in Medford and thereafter throughout southern Oregon, without any meaningful opportunity for formal input from the State of Oregon.

As you know, Oregon Governors have long pursued a One-Tribe, One-Casino policy. My approach to working with Oregon Tribes to establish their gaming facilities was based on the fundamental principle that tribal governments had an abiding interest in generating revenue to support essential services, but not at the expense of Oregonians' quality of life and community health. Governor Kate Brown's recent opposition letter and former Governor Kitzhaber's 1997 position paper and each of their comments in opposition to the Coquille Tribe's project are consistent with those goals. I too have been opposed, and I remain opposed, to recent tribal attempts to develop casinos off of tribal reservation lands in Oregon.

The Coquille Tribe's plans threaten to upend the balance that Oregon and our nine tribes have struck over the last 25 years. If the Coquille Tribe is allowed to build a casino in Medford—on lands which they did not historically own or occupy—it will mean that the Department of the Interior reads the Coquille Restoration Act to allow the Tribe to build casinos in Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson, and Lane Counties. I have seen Senator Ron Wyden and Congressman Peter DeFazio's recent letter to Interior Department Secretary Sally Jewell indicating that was not the intent of that federal law.

I agree with Senator Wyden and Congressman DeFazio's concerns. If the federal government accepts Coquille's position, there would be no limit on the number of casinos in those five Southern Oregon counties. Facilities in Eugene, Ashland, Medford, and all along I-5 would be limited only by the Coquille Tribe's ability to buy land and what the gaming market could bear.

On your watch, the single largest expansion of gaming in Oregon could occur—worst of all, without any real involvement by the State or its Governor. The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act and related federal law contemplates state and local involvement in whether the United States allows tribes to build new casinos, especially in lands that are not a tribe's ancestral lands. By perverting "restored lands" under federal law, Coquille is trying to carve state and local governments entirely out of the process.

I urge you to reject this reckless attempt to dramatically expand tribal gaming in Southern Oregon. It is bad for the State, bad for Oregonians, and bad for Oregon Tribes. I believe this project and this move are plainly illegal. Rather than taking a passive approach to this unlawful expansion of gaming, the Interior Department and BIA should stop this project without any further expense of federal and state taxpayer resources.

Thank you for considering my thoughts and opinions.

Best regards,



Barbara Roberts  
Oregon Governor 1991-1995

CC: Governor Kate Brown  
Sen. Ron Wyden  
Sen. Jeff Merkley  
Rep. Suzanne Bonamici  
Rep. Greg Walden  
Rep. Earl Blumenauer  
Rep. Peter DeFazio  
Rep. Kurt Schrader