



May 31, 2016

Mayor John Stromberg and Ashland City Council
20 East Main Street
Ashland, OR 97520

Dear Mayor Stromberg and Members of the Ashland City Council,

I am writing to bring your attention to a potential casino development in Medford that, if approved, has significant statewide implications for future casino developments across Oregon, including Ashland. While we are concerned about the negative economic impact this casino will have in Medford, we are very concerned that if this policy change is approved, it would open the floodgates to casino expansion throughout the Rogue and Willamette Valleys. Simply put, cities like Ashland would have no ability to stop them.

As you are probably aware, the Coquille Tribe, which is headquartered on the coast in North Bend, is attempting to build a new casino in Medford. The Tribe is circumventing the federal Indian Regulatory Gaming Act (IGRA) and attempting to convince the federal government to misinterpret a very narrow and specific land exception to put a piece of commercial property that the Tribe owns into trust for the specific purpose of gaming. The Tribe has no ancestral ties or historical occupation of the land they purchased in Medford.

If the federal government approves this land transaction, it would forever change the policy precedents that govern Indian gaming and allow the Tribe to purchase property throughout its "service area," which includes Douglas, Jackson, and Lane Counties, and follow the same process. The result could be small facilities with a handful of slot machines scattered throughout the city and county or large-scale machine-gaming casinos with hundreds of machines and no state or local oversight or revenue sharing.

If approved in Medford, this tribe and other tribes would be able to locate casinos throughout their services areas without any meaningful input from City or County Government, as IGRA provides. Ashland is in their service area and in fact, the tribe has already proposed that the federal government consider other casino sites beyond Medford and throughout Southern Oregon. We will not have a role in deciding whether casinos are right for our communities and neither local government nor the Governor will have any authority to approve or deny these facilities. The decision will rest solely with the tribes and the federal government.

Needless to say, casinos in Medford, Ashland, Eugene and across Oregon should give us all grave concerns. Right now the laws that govern gaming in Oregon are specific to one-casino per tribe on reservation land and the State Lottery, which fuels economic development and funding for public education. This policy decision before the U.S. Department of Interior for the casino in Medford puts that framework at risk and if approved, would likely put hundreds of small businesses out of business, including many of our members that host video lottery terminals in their establishments for the Oregon Lottery. It would cut directly into local tax rolls and state funding for education and forever change the landscape of our state.

The federal government, through the Secretary of the Interior is expected to issue a decision this summer regarding whether Coquille can build a casino in Medford. I encourage you to reach out to Governor Brown, Congressman Walden, and State Senator Bates, and ensure that the City's interests are being adequately represented on the state and federal level. Senator Wyden and Congressman DeFazio have already set the record straight regarding the legislation Coquille is trying to misuse. If I can answer any questions, or provide any further information, please let me know.

This new Medford casino may not seem to be a direct problem for Ashland, but the consequences for the city and state could be catastrophic. Very simply, if the Coquille Tribe can build a casino in Medford, they can build one in Ashland.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Brandt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "B".

Jason Brandt
President & CEO
Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association

cc: City Attorney David Lohman
City Administrator Dave Kanner