



May 31, 2016

Mayor Kitty Piercy and Eugene City Council
125 East 8th Avenue, 2nd Floor
Eugene, OR 97401

Dear Mayor Piercy and Members of the Eugene 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 Eugene. 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. In this scenario, cities like Eugene would have no ability to stop them.

For background, 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 this 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 service areas without any meaningful input from City or County Government, as IGRA provides. In fact, the tribe has already proposed that the federal government consider other casino sites beyond Medford and throughout Southern Oregon. Under this scenario, your role as a community leader in deciding whether casinos are right for your community would be circumvented. 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 downtown Eugene and across Oregon should give us all cause for concern. 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. Please work with our Governor and federal representatives to stop this effort while we still can. 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 problem for Eugene, but the consequences for the City and State could be significant. Very simply, if the Coquille Tribe can build a casino in Medford, they can build one in Eugene.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Brandt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jason Brandt
President & CEO
Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association

cc: Jon Ruiz, Eugene City Manager