

PETER COURTNEY
President of the Senate

**Senate General Government, Consumer and Small
Business Protection Committee**

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Senator Larry George, Vice Chair
Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson
Senator Floyd Prozanski
Senator Herman Baertschiger

TESTIMONY BY SENATOR PETER COURTNEY
SUPPORTING SB 3
FEBRUARY 22, 2013

Chair Shields, Vice Chair George, members of the General Government Committee: thank you for hearing my testimony today.

My name is Peter Courtney. I am a State Senator, and I live in North Salem.

Nearly 30 years ago the State of Oregon recognized the need to create a permanent point of contact and on-going forum for tribal-state issues. The Commission on Indian Services (CIS) was created by statute in 1975 to improve services to Native Americans in Oregon. Its members are appointed jointly by the Senate President -- that's me -- and the Speaker of the House to a two-year term. CIS members select their own officers to serve one-year terms of office.

This body advises the Legislative and Executive branches on ways to improve communication and coordination with tribes in an effort to avoid unnecessary court disputes and to highlight shared interests. Prior to its establishment, there was no good way for state government to consider Indian concerns directly. It serves as a forum for the exchange of information between state government and Indian communities; and it serves as a catalyst for bringing about change where change is needed.

Currently, I'm responsible for making appointments to 75 boards, commissions, and task forces. Legislators are busy people. You can't imagine how difficult it is to find Senators that are willing and able to serve on all these boards that are also motivated enough to show up to meetings.

The Indian Services Commission is different. Legislators want to be a part of this – it is a coveted assignment. Perhaps it is because Native Americans are part of our DNA. They are certainly an undeniable part of our heritage and history, as a nation and as a people.

I think adding to the membership of this Commission is important to strengthen the ties and increase understanding between our government and theirs. As such, it is important to have bipartisan representation from both the House and the Senate. That is why I introduced this bill – which simply adds one appointed member from each chamber to serve on the Commission.

I believe additional legislators on the Commission would be a good thing, so I respectfully encourage you to support this measure.

Thank you.