

**Testimony Before The House Judiciary Committee
In Support of Senate Bill 343
For The Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians
Chief Law Enforcement Officer for the Tribe, Brad Kneaper**

I am Chief Law Enforcement Officer for the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians. I am also an enrolled Siuslaw Member of that Tribe.

We respectfully ask you to pass SB 343. The bill repeals the sunset clause currently threatening continuation in force of SB 412 (2011).

SB 412 (2011) has improved public safety for the People of my Tribe and for all of the Tribe's friends and neighbors in Lane, Douglas, and Coos Counties. I am aware of no difficulties arising from its implementation.

My opinions are based on: my work as Chief Law Enforcement Officer and 11 years of experience with the Tribe's police department as Lieutenant and Chief of Police; 17 years of experience as an Oregon State Police Trooper, Senior Trooper, Detective and Sergeant; consultations with state, county, and city law enforcement officers and agencies since SB 412 (2011) went into effect; on the proceedings of two statewide conferences on the subject of SB 412 (2011) jointly sponsored by tribes and the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training; and on the results of a study of the experience of each tribe under SB 412 (2011) and commissioned by the tribes.

Despite having state-wide law enforcement power, city police departments and sheriff's offices emphasize law enforcement within their respective home jurisdictions. The same is true of my Tribe. We emphasize law enforcement on the tribe's lands and in and around the tribe's facilities.

Our lands and facilities are dispersed over a wide area, from the tribal casino in Florence in the north to our tribal headquarters in the Empire neighborhood of Coos Bay in the south. Our officers frequently travel between these areas.

Each trip from the southern part of the range we count as our ancestral territory to its northern reaches takes our officers across three counties. The state police, county sheriffs, and city police throughout this region have tried hard to meet public safety needs with dwindling resources. On many days, tribal police officers who drive from one end to the other of this region never see a law enforcement officer from any other agency.

Prior to SB 412, our authority to take action to protect the public during our travels between tribal facilities was, at best, uncertain, and at worst, denied. For example, before SB 412 became law, I was obliged to wait and watch while summoning help from the closest non-tribal police department to execute an arrest

warrant on a convicted sex offender wanted for Rape and Kidnap, who had fled Washington State and whom I recognized on non-tribal land along Highway 101. Today, like any other law enforcement officer with the same DPSST certification as I possess, and thanks to SB 412, justice would not be delayed. Under SB 412, I have authority to end the fugitive's flight immediately by executing the arrest warrant. If the sunset clause is not repealed, I will be stripped of that authority.

SB 412 has had another very important beneficial effect. Police agencies in Oregon, including the tribal police department of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians, typically assign a single officer to each patrol car. We rely on our training to help minimize the risks we face when we engage in solo law enforcement action. Modern radio communication and other aids allow rapid distribution of calls for assistance, yet the long distances between communities in our part of the State and the fact that law enforcement agencies are stretched to the breaking point throughout the area can significantly slow down the arrival of another officer at the scene of an action.

Prior to passage of SB 412, the tribal police officers of my tribe did our best to help other officers. And the reverse was also generally true. But the authority of tribal police officers to provide such assistance was not clear. Significant legal issues would have arisen if we'd been called on to do more than be a silent, supportive presence. And, while we have always required our officers to be certified and trained to the same extent all other non-tribal officers are, and I have complete confidence in the training and professionalism of the Tribe's police officers, the Tribe was under no legal obligation to have certified its officers to the same standards as the officers whom we sought to assist.

SB 412 has eliminated these barriers to aid and provide support to colleagues from other police departments. The tribal police department is fully integrated into the dispatch systems for other police departments in our region. When we are near a police action being taken by a solo officer of another department, our officers routinely go to the location and standby to assist if the officer needs assistance. In significant contrast to the situation before SB 412, we arrive at that scene having the same training, the same legal authority, and the same duties as the officer from the other jurisdiction.

Respectfully Submitted to the House Judiciary Committee for the Committee's April 27, 2015 hearing on SB 383.

For additional information, please contact Pete Shepherd, 503-871-3787.