

TESTIMONY OF BUD LANE, TRIBAL COUNCIL VICE-
CHAIRMAN
CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF SILETZ INDIANS
IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 1542 BEFORE THE
SENATSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
February 10th, 2016

Good afternoon, Chair Roblan and Members of the Senate Education Committee. Thank you for taking testimony on Senate Bill 1542 to allow for use of a Native symbol, or “mascot”, upon agreement between an Oregon Tribe governing body and a nearby school.

My name is Bud Lane and I am the Vice-Chairman of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians (CTSI). I am also a language teacher for the Siletz Tribe and I teach our Athabaskan Language in the Siletz Valley School.

In the mid 1980’s, LCSD closed Siletz High School, and our students were shipped to Toledo High School, then the Middle School was taken, and those students were also shipped to Toledo. Neither the High School nor the Middle School students received fair or equal treatment at their new schools. Their ability to participate in sports was diminished because of logistical barriers to attending practices and games/meets, and issues directly related to their being Siletz community children--not Toledo children. Many mourned the loss of their Siletz Warrior status/identity, our drop-out rate was horrendous--over 50%--and our students’ school experience was often one of unfair treatment. Along with that, our tribal community lost a core part of our identity and a unifying force. Both of my own children, like many others, had to leave Siletz and attend Toledo High School.

Eventually, LCSD decided to close the remaining Siletz School. They just announced at the end of a school year that they would not re-

open in the fall. The Siletz Tribe had to hire a consultant to assist the Siletz Community to hurriedly draft a charter and move the draft charter through the School District. We were successful in getting the Siletz Valley Charter School K-8th Grades opened by that Fall.

We have as a Tribe, as a Community, and as a School put up with many years of mistreatment and loss and, each time, we have fought back to maintain our identity as Siletz Warriors. Our people fought for years to stay in our homeland, through the Rogue River Wars of the 1850's to the eventual Treaty negotiations that resulted in the land cession of most of Western Oregon. Our Siletz Reservation was established in 1855, at the close of the Rogue River Wars, with its headquarters in the Siletz Valley. This reservation was intended for all of the Western Oregon Tribes to be confederated upon, subject to ratified treaty provisions, which included the providing of schools for our people. Those schools operated as an Agency boarding school from the 1860's until 1908, when the Agency boarding school was discontinued. The U.S. surveyed the "Siletz Agency School Farm" (now the town of Siletz) and sold it, instead of turning it over to the Tribe. The old boarding school was maintained as a Siletz Reservation Day School until ca. 1930. At that time, the Day School was closed because so many non-Indians had moved onto Siletz Reservation lands which had been opened to settlement, that a new public school was built and all Siletz member students could attend that school.

In 2012, the Department of Education adopted a total ban on any mascot name referencing Indians over our Tribe's strong objections and without consultation. Their rule is not based on our reality at Siletz. We are proud to be called the Siletz Indian Warriors. The name reflects our heritage and our veterans' participation in both World Wars, the Korean Conflict, the Vietnam War, Desert Storm, and the Iraq War. My own father, Alfred Lane Jr. who is now 87, is a

veteran of WWII, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. He left the Siletz school at 17 years old to defend the Siletz Nation and the United States, just as many other Siletz Indians did. Many others did not return, making the ultimate sacrifice for their Tribe and Country.

From the days of the Rogue River Wars to this day, these are the Warriors that we honor and revere. It is with that same honor, reverence and respect we call our students Siletz Warriors of the Siletz Valley School.

The Siletz Tribe understands that racism still exists in many forms. However, the Board of Education's cookie cutter approach to resolve this issue, where one size fits all is not acceptable. The Siletz Tribe believes in the Sovereign right of every Tribe to determine their own path, according to their people's values, in their own homeland.

The new rule of the Board is movement toward understanding the importance of the role of Oregon tribes in addressing public education and respectful recounting of Oregon history. Again, however, it was adopted without consultation with tribes, despite the urging of our tribe and this committee. A problem for our tribe is that the Board does not understand the importance of our Warriors to our tribe and yet it still would get to approve our tribe-school agreement

SB 1542 does not allow any use of a Native mascot without agreement of a nearby tribe. The bill is consonant with the established Oregon principle of government-to-government dialogue and cooperation set forth in Senate Bill 770 over a decade ago. We urge you to support SB 1542 for local control and cooperation and give the bill a do pass recommendation. Thank you for allowing me to appear here and testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have for me.