



Testimony of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
Senate Committee on Judiciary, Oregon Legislative Assembly
SB 144 April 4, 2017

Chairman Prozanski and members of the committee,

Good morning. My name is Aaron Ashley. I am an elected member of the Board of Trustees of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. I am pleased to be here to convey the Confederated Tribe's support of SB 144 with the -2 amendment drafted by Senator Ferrioli.

Cultural protection, preservation and perpetuation for the benefit of current and future generations are high priorities of the Confederated Tribes. Preserving culturally significant places and resources, including cultural objects, is paramount.

SB 144 will ensure the return of more cultural resources to Tribes. The underlying bill requires that law enforcement provide notice of seizure of contraband items to the Commission on Indian Services and requires the Commission to provide notice to the appropriate Tribe. These are important and essential steps to return irreplaceable cultural objects to Tribes.

The amendment drafted by Senator Ferrioli at our request also recognizes that Tribes have a long history predating the State of Oregon and that the return of cultural objects has not been a priority of the state or local governments. The State of Oregon needs to continue to work with Oregon Tribes to improve outreach and education efforts to its citizens on the history of the nine Tribes and their respective aboriginal territories and treaty protected traditional use places. These irreplaceable cultural objects remain important to the Tribes' cultural identity, past present and future.

The -2 amendment allows the Department of Justice to prosecute cases when local law enforcement is unable to do so. Giving this authority to the state is necessary because these prosecutions are often complex and smaller communities lack the resources to adequately address the issues presented. No county, as far as I know, has an archaeologist on staff to address cases such as this. Furthermore, the Department of Justice also has greater expertise with an Assistant Attorney General who has practiced in this area of law and has authority in civil cases.

On behalf of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, I urge your support in voting SB 144 with the -2 amendment to the floor. Thank you for your time and consideration.