



To: House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness
From: Reyn Leno, Chair, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
Date: May 4, 2017
Subject: Please Support House Bill 80

Chair Evans, Vice-Chair Boone, Vice-Chair Esquivel, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Reyn Leno, I am the Chairman of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and a member of the Oregon Department of Veteran's Affairs Advisory Committee. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak today in support of Senate Bill 80.

Senate Bill 80 is a move in the right direction in recognizing the service of Native American veterans. The bill requires the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs to assist Oregon's federally recognized tribes with our veterans affairs programs and also with the accreditation of tribal veterans representatives.

Tribal veterans have served at a higher level per capita than any other group and Tribal veterans face unique challenges when seeking access to their earned benefits. The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde has an interest in preserving and protecting quality services and assistance for accessing earned benefits for veterans.

I would also like to urge the legislature to support the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs and to utilize additional funding approved through Measure 96 above that of which is currently budgeted. Veterans are underserved, more than two-thirds of the 350,000 veterans in Oregon are not receiving federal services and connection to services is severely delayed.

We also support amendments requiring state employees assigned to work with tribes, before beginning their work, consult with tribes to learn about the ways tribal members assist or work to help tribal veterans. This will ensure that state employees understand the ways in which tribal veterans seek assistance. For example, tribal veterans may not seek services they need and initial contact may be made by a non-veteran family member assisting them in accessing services that the he or she needs.

Oregon is truly unique when it comes to the relationship between the state and the tribes. Together, we have done amazing things, from Governor Atiyeh and the creation of the Commission on Indian Services, to Governor Kitzhaber's Executive Order 96-30, and then passage of SB 770, which put into statute the government-to-government relationship. We should all be proud as Oregonians of the work done to solidify a strong bond between the state and the tribes. This is yet another example of the collaboration that continues to make Oregon a leader in state-tribal relations.

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde urges support for Senate Bill 80.