

**Confederated Tribes of the
Umatilla Indian Reservation**

Board of Trustees



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Testimony of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
House Committee on Judiciary, Oregon Legislative Assembly
SB 144 May 7, 2017

Chair Barker and members of the committee,

On behalf of the elected Board of Trustees of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, I urge your support of SB 144A.

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 144A will ensure the return of more cultural resources to Tribes. The 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 bill also recognizes that Tribes have a long history predating the State of Oregon and that the return of cultural objects has not historically 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.

As amended, SB 144A 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. The language in the bill was agreed upon with the Oregon District Attorneys Association and the Department of Justice.

On behalf of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, I urge your support in voting SB 144A. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,

Aaron Ashley
Board of Trustees