

**Confederated Tribes of the
Umatilla Indian Reservation**

Board of Trustees



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**Testimony of Charles Sams, Interim Deputy Executive Director
Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
HB 2405**

May 8, 2017

Chairman Dembrow and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, we are pleased to offer written testimony in support of House Bill 2405.

American Indians serve in the armed forces in greater numbers per capita than any other ethnic group, and they have served with distinction in every major conflict for over 200 years. Our Tribe alone has record of over 650 veterans who have served the United States since the Indian Wars to present day.

Oregon's tribes honor community members who serve in the military in many ways, including with veterans memorials. The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation built Nixyaawii Warrior Memorial in 1996. It is an important public gathering place for veterans in our part of Oregon.

In 2015, we applied for a State Parks grant for veteran and war memorials to: Increase ADA accessibility; Restore weathered plaques and walls; Improve security lighting; Upgrade outdated electrical; Install security cameras; and Install post and cable fencing to reduce potential safety hazards.

The Umatilla Board of Trustees authorized matching funds.

After submitting the application, State Parks identified that Tribal governments were not eligible for the grants. They told us the veteran and war memorial funds were limited by statute to local governments. We have since learned that other tribes have run into this same challenge.

Tribal governments act, in many ways, like Oregon's local governments, we fulfill the roles of municipal, county, state and national government. Enrolled tribal members are proud citizens of Oregon and have served our nation. We believe these funds should be available to support all veterans in the State of Oregon.

We ask the Senate Environment & Natural Resources Committee to support this bill and provide a "Do Pass" recommendation to your colleagues on the floor of the Senate.

Sincerely,

Alan Crawford and Woodrow Star
Board of Trustees