

SILETZ RESTORATION ACT

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HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON

INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS

UNITED STATES SENATE

NINETY-FOURTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

S. 2801

A BILL TO REPEAL THE ACT TERMINATING FEDERAL SUPERVISION OVER THE PROPERTY AND MEMBERS OF THE CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF SILETZ INDIANS OF OREGON; TO REINSTITUTE THE CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF SILETZ INDIANS OF OREGON AS A FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED SOVEREIGN INDIAN TRIBE; AND TO RESTORE TO THE CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF SILETZ INDIANS OF OREGON AND ITS MEMBERS THOSE FEDERAL SERVICES AND BENEFITS FURNISHED TO FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED AMERICAN INDIAN TRIBES AND THEIR MEMBERS; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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MARCH 30 AND 31, 1976



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**STATEMENT OF PAULINE BELL RICKS, MEMBER, SILETZ
TRIBAL COUNCIL**

Ms. RICKS. Mr. Chairman, my name is Pauline Bell Ricks. I live at 2660 North 20th Street, Springfield, Oreg. I am a member of the Siletz tribal council since we reorganized in 1973.

Greetings from the Confederated Tribes of Siletz, a once proud people, centrally located on the beautiful Oregon coast.

This is my first trip to our Nation's Capital, and the first time in history that all our tribal council are here at one time. What a thrill and such an honor to know that today our voice will be heard here in Washington, D.C. Although we will be talking about different things, our hearts will be beating as one. It is like singing a song together to the beat of the same drum. For we are all here, speaking up for one tribe that includes many Indian people. I would just like to say I am absolutely overwhelmed to be here.

For 3 years now we have been working very hard toward this bill, Senate Bill 2801. We worked very hard to get our people back again to reorganize our tribe, and after much research, and a lot of input from the Siletz people, we did organize, we held elections and voted for a new tribal council. I have been on this council for 3 years now. Our tribal council and the people at our well-attended meetings decided we were in need of restoration. We had a strong desire for identity. The news traveled fast to our people and they began to come home, for they wanted to hear more about the restoration bill. Many would get up and say how good it is to be "home" again.

For, Siletz, to many of us, will always be home, for some of us had to leave the area to make a living elsewhere. But our roots are buried deep in Siletz. In our hearts we have never left there. Already a good feeling has been created in Siletz, just by going home to the meetings, potlucks, and pow-wows, just like the old days some of us remember so well.

Very briefly, I would like to get across to you what restoration means to me. I speak for other people in the area that I represent as a council member. It will take a long time to heal the wounds and mend the rifts that have sapped the strength of our people. If restoration would come to us, we would once again be known as Indian people.

Our children, born after termination, would have an identity, a tribe to identify with. I cannot think of a more beautiful thing than to see our people walking tall and proud again.

Restoration would mean that we would no longer have to exist as a separate cultural group. For a terminated tribe, that is exactly what we are, even to other Indian tribes that are federally recognized. We are between two cultures. After restoration, we would once again have an Indian voice in Indian affairs.

Our tribal council has a good relationship with our people, and we are all working toward these goals. For we believe restoration would put a little light in the dreary little world most of us have to exist in, and the only way is through restoration.

I am one that had to leave Siletz after termination. I moved to the Springfield area along with about 150 other Siletz people. To-

some pages omitted

History repeats itself again. It came in 1954 and it was called termination. Like the story long ago, things began to happen fast—talk of big money, giving us deeds to our lands, living like a first-class citizen, they were going to train us for jobs. They were going to give us training and prepare us to go down all walks of life, side-by-side with our white brothers. A beautiful picture was being painted right before our eyes. This looked good to our people who survived the depression and war years, for our people have never been out of depression.

Termination was another definite hard blow for the Siletz people. It came all at one time when our boys were coming home from the war. They went away carefree, happy young boys, but came home broken, bitter men, some crippled, some brought home Silver Stars, Purple Hearts.

Yes; we have our Gold Star mothers. For as our men came back one-by-one and looked around they saw that some of their buddies did not come home. I remember these years very well. How happy our people were with our boys coming home again. The war was over; in Japan and Germany, that is. But, the people they fought so proudly for were under duress from the Government. And to these once-again tired men, after all they had been through, anything looked good.

Termination came at a time when our timber was almost logged off. Many of our men worked in the wood and mills, they were once proud, industrious people. But with no jobs there many of us had to leave, for termination did nothing but harm our people. We gave in again. It broke up our tribe.

We began to make our exit out of Siletz, seeking a new home. We have done all we can. Now, back in Siletz our senior citizens are looking up to us, the "Siletz Tribal Council" that sits before you today, with favor in their eyes. They are the ones that attend our meetings faithfully. Our young people are looking up to us, as their leaders, seeking a new day, hoping identity, health, education, and tribalism, will soon be a part of their life. We, the Siletz Coun-

cil, are looking up to you, the Oregon delegation, and leaders of our country, the same way our Siletz people are looking up to us.

We are counting on you.

Chas. H. ...

... M. ...

**STATEMENT OF ROBERT P. RILATOS, VICE CHAIRMAN,
SILETZ TRIBAL COUNCIL**

Mr. RILATOS. Mr. Chairman, I am Robert Rilatos, a descendant of the Rogue River band of Indians who were brought to the Siletz Reservation from the Rogue River Valley in southern Oregon. I have been a lifelong resident of the Siletz area and am presently vice chairman of the tribal council. I would like to speak to you of our economic situation.

Our coastal reservation, once extending approximately 100 miles in length, was the holding of a major portion of old growth Douglas fir and spruce, billions of board feet, which played a major part in Oregon's and the Nation's economy.

Basic employment for the Siletz Indian people at the time of termination was the lumber industry, primarily logging. During World War II and the Korean conflict, jobs were plentiful for the Indians. It was a tradition for our men prior to that era as well.

At one time, there were 60 sawmills in Lincoln County and numerous outside companies transported logs to other areas. The majority of our people, the breadwinners, and some of our Indian women, were associated in some manner with the lumber industry. The Siletz Indian men were recognized as the best loggers ever known. I started logging at age 14 and worked as a logger for 19 years.

Some of our younger people chose to get an education at Chemawa School or in colleges through BIA scholarships but most stayed in the community and found jobs in the wood industry.

However, at the time of termination, in the early 1950's, the boom of the lumber industry was rapidly declining. Sawmills were being phased out. Pulpmills, plywood, and world trade came on the scene and with them, automation, which meant new skills were one of the requirements for employment. This, in itself, eliminated a great

many jobs for our Indian people. The other requirement for employment that hindered us was that of a high school diploma, or equivalent, which many of our people did not have.

Termination in 1954 was a fatal mistake and a very big letdown for our people. Many did not know what it meant nor what the effect would be for the Indian people in Siletz. The impact of termination has been severe to the present day. Many lost lands when their trust property became taxable and others were forced to sell their land to survive.

Many more were forced to relocate to find jobs in valley cities. The people became separated, tribalism was gone and many lost their identity as Indians. During this time of upheaval we even lost our tribal cemetery.

The Indian people of the Oregon coast were never rich. Our richness is in our culture and our feeling for the land. Some have clung to these precious birthrights. Our Indian dance group has been active longer than I can remember and my family has been personally involved in preserving this part of our culture. Our leader, Archie Ben, 76 years old and a full-blooded Chetco, has been the inspiration for over 50 years. He has taught the young people the dances of our culture and in his presentations to non-Indians at our annual Siletz Valley pow-wow and in other presentations, has inspired many with that dignity and pride the American Indian does not have for sale.

I feel very strongly that our dance group played a very important role in the reorganization of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz and the awareness that restoration is a dire need for our people and the preservation of our culture.

Our present economic situation is critical. The average income for families in our tribe is only \$3,333 which is only 45 percent of the average for non-Indian families.

In addition, we have found that unemployment is 43.8 percent among our tribe.

The statistics supporting these conclusions are found in Mr. Sayers' report, which is included in appendix I, p. 190 of this hearing.

Mr. Chairman, I am confident that Mr. Sayers' figures are conservative. I have made informal calculations which indicate that unemployment is significantly higher than the 43.8 percent used by Mr. Sayers. I am confident that my present employment with CETA and my lifelong relationship with this tribe puts me in an excellent position to reach these conclusions.

In May of 1975, I was elected by the tribal council to be the manpower coordinator of the CETA III Indian manpower program in Siletz. The need for such a program in our community was recognized by the Oregon tribe of Warm Springs through a 30-day planning process. Warm Springs then delegated Siletz to be an administrative arm in setting up a local program. This had been the first Indian manpower program ever for the Siletz Indians.

Since May of 1975, we have established outreach needs assessment to define and prioritize the need of the unemployed Indian people in our area.

In order to use the limited amount of funds available—\$54,000 for a six-county service area—to the best advantage, it was necessary to set these priorities to better serve the clients' needs.

Our CETA program has been, we feel, effective for the Indians in our community as well as for the outside community as well. We are located in an A-frame building in the city square in Siletz. Our office is the center for the tribal council, the manpower programs and the alcohol and drug abuse program. It is a drop-in center which is trying to help all the needs and requests of our people that we can.

Since the program has been initiated, and for the short period in which it has functioned, we have been able to deliver services to over 140 Indians in various ways; placement in training programs at community colleges, direct job placements in local jobs such as the local schools, county and State Governments and the lumber industry.

We developed a work-experience project in conjunction with the city of Siletz and our cemetery association to conserve and beautify our city and our 10-acre Paul Washington Cemetery named after the first Siletz Indian to die in World War I. Sixteen NYC youths participated in the program as well as initiating a summer project to assist the elderly in improving their homes.

The CETA program will phase out. It is a Band-Aid approach. Only restoration will allow us to have ongoing comprehensive plans for the educational, employment, and economic development of the Siletz Indian. It would insure the participants of our programs that the Federal Government was concerned that they pursue and achieve their goal—fulfillment of their economic future.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my presentation. I thank you for allowing me to present these ideas to you. I would appreciate your and the committee's full and fair consideration of the Siletz restoration bill.

**STATEMENT OF DELORES PIGSLEY, MEMBER,
SILETZ TRIBAL COUNCIL**

Ms. PIGSLEY. Mr. Chairman, my name is Delores Pigsley. Present location of tribal members; according to information gathered by Siletz people, the following was found: 929 Indians enrolled at the time of termination; there were also 500 Siletz Indians disqualified from the Siletz rolls. Most tribal members have remained in Lincoln County, more so than in any other location.

There are 525 Siletz Indians identified in Lincoln County; 327 identified themselves as Siletz tribal members, 223 Siletz Indians live in the city of Siletz; 130 Indians were determined deceased that were on the original termination roll. Approximately 300 members have moved away from the Siletz area. Several people migrated to the Willamette Valley, Portland, Salem, Eugene, and Springfield. There are no accurate census records and no specific government records were kept after termination. At termination approximately 73 percent of the enrolled members lived on or near the reservation. Twenty years later, approximately 27 percent of those people lived in that area. The majority of persons living away live within a 2½ hour drive, making it easier for them to attend the monthly council meetings of the Siletz.

I might add a personal note, in my family, which includes brothers, sisters and their families, 21 live out of State, 22 in the Willamette Valley, 14 in Lincoln County and four in other Oregon towns.

Thank you.

Mr. BENSELL. We will now hear testimony from Alta Courville on health. Alta is a Mackanunutney, too.

**STATEMENT OF ALTA COURVILLE, MEMBER,
SILETZ TRIBAL COUNCIL**

Ms. COURVILLE. As Art has told you, I am a member of the Mackanunutney Tribe of Siletz, also a member of the tribal council. For the past 9 years I have worked as a dental assistant on various reservations in the Northwest. I have presented my written testimony to Mr. Gerard's staff.

I am offering this oral testimony on health problems.

The Siletz Indian Reservation was terminated in 1954. Following termination, the Siletz people relinquished their special Federal relationship which provided them with education, health, and economic development, employment assistance and other services.

Since termination, the Siletz people have lost much of their sense of identity. Gradually, they lost their land base. Economic development has become practically nonexistent. Their homes are generally in a state of disrepair and overcrowded. The children drop out of school in increasing numbers. Few State and country programs reach this community in a meaningful way.

Although jobs, housing, and education are extremely important and necessary to the Siletz people, my greatest concern is with the health problems of this group.

In the more than 20 years since termination, the health care of the Siletz Indians has been largely neglected. A recent survey of 84 identified tribal members found 29 percent with medical needs, 75 percent with dental needs, and 30 percent identifying eye care needs.

From my direct experience and observations, I would estimate these statistics to be extremely conservative. A somewhat earlier survey identified vision, dental, and hearing problems as some of the primary educational obstacles of Indian children in Indian schools. Most of the parents were not able to afford followup care. Therefore, these problems were not cared for.

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