

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

1/31/2023

The Honorable Deb Haaland,  
Secretary  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C St NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland,

I am writing to express my strong concerns regarding the Department's consideration of the Coquille Indian Tribe's proposal to build a casino in Medford, Oregon. The Department previously, and correctly, rejected the Medford proposal after determining it failed to comply with applicable laws and regulations. Additionally, the proposal is widely opposed in the region and would have a significant negative impact on communities and tribes in both California and Oregon. The Department should once again reject this dubious proposal.

The Department's consideration of the Coquille proposal, some 170 driving miles from the tribe's existing reservation, would create new precedent allowing tribal gaming vast distances from tribes' reservations in areas where the Department has determined a tribe has no historical connection. Such a significant policy change should require Congressional authorization and be considered through a normal regulatory process, including tribal consultation, yet the Department appears to be considering a unique interpretation for the benefit of a single tribe.

In doing so, the Department disregards the congressional intent of the Coquille Restoration Act sponsors, who amended the bill and wrote to the Department making it clear that they did so precisely to limit the tribe's ability to conduct gaming to two counties - not the county in which Medford is located. I understand that one of those original sponsors currently serves in the Senate and has again written to you expressing opposition to this proposal.

Furthermore, the Medford proposal would have a devastating impact on communities and tribes in the region. Rather than generate new jobs, it would cannibalize employment from existing tribal gaming facilities - an impact the draft environmental impact statement estimates tribes and surrounding communities would take decades to recover from. The project would directly harm key services tribal governments provide to their members, including health care, housing, and emergency services, leaving their members more dependent on the federal government. Hundreds of jobs in Siskiyou County, which has a current unemployment rate of 5.3%, would be

endangered or eliminated in order to create jobs in neighboring Jackson County, which has an unemployment rate of 4.8%.

The Coquille Medford proposal fails every test the Department applies to tribal gaming applications: it does not comply with federal law, the Department's regulations, or requirements imposed on all other tribes. It would allow gaming in areas where a tribe does not have a significant historical connection, disregarding a foundational tenet of tribal gaming. It upends the intent of Congress in enacting relevant legislation. Finally, it would negatively impact many tribes and communities in the region, perhaps irreparably.

On this basis, I urge you to reject the project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Doug LaMalfa". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Doug LaMalfa  
Member of Congress

CC: Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs Bryan Newland  
Paula Hart, Director, Office of Indian Gaming