



Citizens Against RESERVATION SHOPPING

May 14, 2007

BAIRD INTERVENTION SOUGHT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT ON CASINO EIS

An attempt to short-circuit the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) by developers of the proposed Cowlitz casino at La Center, Wash., has resulted in an appeal to Rep. Brian Baird (D-Wash.) to intervene with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). In a letter to Baird, Ed Lynch, chairman of Citizens Against Reservation Shopping (CARS) says the public deserves either an entirely new Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or at the very least, a 60-day period to examine and comment on the Cowlitz Tribe's Business Plan and Unmet Needs Report.

Both reports were to have been part of a revised trust land application filed on behalf of the tribe last summer. Instead they appeared, without notice, as an appendix to the preliminary Final EIS when it was released by BIA to cooperating agencies in March 2007. The preliminary Final EIS has yet to be released to the public, and won't be for several months, according to the BIA regional office in Portland. The Business Plan is necessary for preparation of a complete and accurate EIS, and is required as a part of the application because it defines tribal needs, the basis for the trust land analysis. As such it should have been included in the application at the beginning.

According to Lynch's letter, the Business Plan states that the tribe's "unmet need" is a "shocking \$223 million in initial costs and \$113.5 million annually." Components include a "\$71 million per year health care program, which is seven times greater than the health care needs of comparable populations. In addition, the tribe includes expensive discretionary programs in its unmet needs, such as a \$22.5 million horse program, a \$23 million fishery program and a \$13.5 million native forestry program."

Lynch calls the needs statement "exaggerated," but more important, he says, is the tribal consultant's conclusion that the \$113.5 million annual need can only be met by a very large casino near Portland. "On this basis," writes Lynch, "AES (the consultant) rejects numerous alternatives that are within the tribe's historic land base, are closer to the vast majority of Cowlitz tribal members and do no harm to the community."

Lynch says he is asking Rep. Baird's help in securing the 60-day public review, at the minimum, to secure a fair and objective public review of information "the tribe sought to sneak into the process late and unnoticed." Baird was successful with the BIA in

obtaining a 30-day comment extension for the tribe's new application last summer, two 2005 public meetings BIA conducted in Clark County and the appointment of an ombudsman for the casino.

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>>[Read the letter to Rep. Baird.](#)