

REMARKS BY THE HONORABLE LES AU COIN
SEPTEMBER 14, 1983

THE GRAND RONDE RESTORATION ACT

Today, I am introducing legislation to restore federal status to the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Indians in Polk County.

It enables the tribe to qualify for education, health care and economic development programs administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and other federal agencies.

With the full support of the community, the Grand Ronde have worked tirelessly to retain their identity as a people, to preserve their culture, and to achieve economic self-sufficiency. Restoration of tribal status places an important tool in the hands of a tribe which asks for no special privileges, but only for the opportunity to help itself.

I sponsored similar legislation for the Siletz Indians, in Lincoln County in 1977. That bill has demonstrated that restoration is a critical step toward the goal tribes such as the Siletz and Grand Ronde have set for themselves, which is self determination. Examples of possible tribal programs include schools, vocational training programs, and tribal enterprises such as those being operated successfully by the Warm Springs.

The legislation I am introducing today also establishes membership requirements and provides for the election of an Interim Council which will represent the tribe during its reorganization process.

A constitution and bylaws will be drawn up by the Interim Council for approval by the tribe. Following the pattern of the Siletz, the tribe and the Bureau of Indian Affairs are authorized to develop plans for a reservation to serve as an economic land base, subject to the approval of Congress.

This bill has received strong, bi-partisan support from city, county and state officials, church groups, and business and civic organizations in Oregon.

The Grand Ronde Restoration Act is endorsed by Governor Vic Atiyeh, State Senator Dell Isham, and State Representative Paul Hanneman, the Commissioners from Polk and Yamhill Counties, the cities of McMinnville, Sheridan, and Willamina, and the Indian tribes of the Siletz, Umatilla and Warm Springs.

Organizations supporting the legislation include the National Coalition to Support Indian Treaties, the Affiliated Tribes of the Northwest, the Friends Committee on National Legislation, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, the Presbytery of the Cascades and the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, among others.

This bill is the product of years of careful preparation by the Grand Ronde tribes. The endorsements I have just mentioned show how well the tribe has done its work. Now it is time to take the next step, which is the introduction in Congress of this restoration bill. I am pleased to take that step today, and I am confident this Congress will act to restore to the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Indians the official federal status and trust relationship with the government which was taken from them, in a mistaken moment of history, 15 congresses ago.