

# Fort Belknap Indian Community

EXHIBIT 3  
DATE 2-10-05  
HB 378



R.R. 1, Box 66  
Fort Belknap Agency  
Harlem, Montana 59526  
PH: (406) 353-2205  
FAX: Council - (406) 353-4541  
FAX: Departments - (406) 353-2797

Fort Belknap Indian Community  
(Tribal Govt.)  
Fort Belknap Indian Community  
(Elected to administer the affairs of the community and  
to represent the Assiniboine and the Gros Ventre  
Tribes of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation)

## TESTIMONY OF

**HAROLD "JIGGS" MAIN,  
GROS VENTRE COUNCILMAN,  
FISH & GAME OVERSIGHT CHAIRMAN,  
FORT BELKNAP INDIAN COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

**ON HOUSE BILL NO. 378**

**FEBRUARY 10, 2005**

Greetings from the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. My name is Harold "Jiggs" Main, and I am an elected Gros Ventre Councilman, serving as the Chairman of the Council Committee which oversees our Fish and Game Program. I want to thank the Committee for this opportunity to provide my testimony in support of HB-378, introduced by Jonathan Windy Boy.

As a former Director of our Fish and Game program, I am familiar with the various challenges Tribes face in administering an effective Fish and Game program using the existing funding sources available to Tribal governments. Our reservation is nearly 700,000 acres, just north of the Missouri Breaks area, and encompassing part of the Little Rockies. We regulate all hunting on reservation. Many enrolled members of our Tribes hunt on reservation, often for subsistence purposes. Many of our enrolled members also purchase State licenses for off-reservation hunting.

Patrolling and regulating hunting activities and monitoring species to determine appropriate harvest levels has always been the goal of our program. We have always been concerned that inadequate funding has led to inadequate monitoring and regulation of our resources. Simply stated, we don't have enough resources to do the job.

In recent years, we have discussed with the State of Montana the possibility of sharing some of the federal monies which come to Montana from excise taxes, based on population, land base and water areas. It has been explained to us that Reservation lands, Indian population and water areas are utilized in the formula to secure excise taxes from the federal government.

The response I heard from Montana officials is that less than one (1) per cent would be made available to Tribal governments. This percentage is in no way commensurate with the approximate 7% Native American population and land base in the State.

While the State of Montana may provide substantial regulatory and monitoring services on some federal lands in the State, on our Reservation, nearly 96% of the lands are Indian or Tribally owned. The State has a minimal regulatory and monitoring presence, because of this land ownership pattern, and because the reservation Native American population approaches this percentage also. The State simply does not have jurisdiction, for most purposes, on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation.

This means that the Fort Belknap Indian Community Council has the regulatory and monitoring responsibilities here, and should have the federal excise taxes coming to Montana, based on our population, land and water percentages. Again, we have had no success, through the compact process to accomplish this goal.

Additionally, our belief is that because many of our enrolled members hunt for subsistence, both on and off reservation, our per capita payment of federal excise taxes on ammunition is higher than that experienced off-reservation. This is true, simply because per capita, we use more ammunition.

It is for these reasons we support HB-378. This bill would help spread the use of these monies on the lands and for people for which they were intended. These resources would enable our Tribal government to better regulate and monitor hunting and fishing on our Reservation. This accomplishment would benefit everyone, as neighboring off-reservation lands (and hunters) would see the results of better managed Reservation resources.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony and for your careful deliberation on this important bill.



Harold "Jiggs" Main  
Gros Ventre Councilman  
Fort Belknap Indian Community Council