



STATE-TRIBAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

67th Montana Legislature

SENATE MEMBERS

Bob Brown
Mike Fox
Jason Small
Susan Webber

HOUSE MEMBERS

Casey Knudsen
Joe Read
Tyson Running Wolf
Lola Sheldon-Galloway
Frank Smith
Sharon Stewart Peregoy

COMMITTEE STAFF

Pad McCracken - Research Analyst
Bethany McDowell - Secretary
Laura Sankey Keip - Attorney

MINUTES LOG

April 06, 2022
Fort Belknap Indian Community, MT
Helena, Montana

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MEMBERS PRESENT:

Rep. Tyson Running Wolf, Chair (D)
Sen. Bob Brown (R)
Sen. Mike Fox (D)
Rep. Casey Knudsen (R)
Rep. Joe Read (R)
Rep. Lola Sheldon-Galloway (R)
Rep. Frank Smith (D)
Sen. Susan Webber (D)

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Sen. Jason Small (R)
Rep. Sharon Stewart Peregoy (D)

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT:

Pad McCracken, Research Analyst
Bethany McDowell, Secretary
Laura Sankey Keip, Attorney

AGENDA [\(Attachment 1\)](#)

VISITORS' LIST [\(Attachment 2\)](#)

COMMITTEE ACTION

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

13:20:33 Rep. Tyson Running Wolf-D called the meeting to order at 1:20 PM. The committee secretary took roll.

Opening Remarks

13:23:09 Rep. Running Wolf began introductions between the Fort Belnap Indian Community (FBIC) Councilmembers and the legislators. He gave opening remarks.

13:31:23 Sen. Fox introduced some of the visitors and presenters in attendance.

DISCUSSION WITH FORT BELKNAP INDIAN COMMUNITY (FBIC)

13:33:38 Warren Morin, FBIC councilmember, discussed bringing more buffalo onto the reservation and requested the committee's help in pursuing that. He asked the committee about SNAP benefits being given back to the government and requested help that could be given. He discussed the importance of making the reservation self-sustainable and getting funding help for agricultural struggles and issues with wildfires. He discussed teaching children about their culture.

13:39:15 Steve Fox, FBIC Councilmember, discussed the lack of water on the reservation, the potential repercussions, and the need for funding.

13:42:05 Mr. Morin stated the FBIC's desire for funding for a health and wellness center on the reservation.

13:46:54 Delina Cuts The Rope, Chief Administrative Officer for the Ft. Belnap Indian Community, discussed the informational packet presented to the committee, which included some of the challenges that FBIC face. [\(Exhibit 1\)](#)

Committee Questions/Discussion

13:57:24 Rep. Sheldon-Galloway stated that she would like to work with the council on building a bridge for Indian foster children in Great Falls and the tribal community.

13:59:07 Mr. Morin stated his ideas for including foster children in community activities.

13:59:24 Mr. Fox stated additional ways that foster children can grow as a part of the FBIC.

14:00:19 Rep. Sheldon-Galloway stated her interest in introducing foster children to ceremonies and festivals on the reservation.

14:00:47 Mr. Morin introduced Dominic Messerly, FBIC councilmember, who shared his perspective on Indian Education for All (IEFA).

14:04:52 Sen. Webber asked Mr. Morin about the jurisdictional issues that were brought up during their discussion.

14:05:32 Mr. Morin explained the jurisdiction conflicts between the reservation and the fish and wildlife service, as well as the work they are doing together.

14:09:09 Sen. Webber stated that 30-35% of children in foster care are native children. She followed by asking about voting access on the reservation.

14:11:21 Ms. Cuts The Rope discussed the council's work on implementing satellite voting offices.

14:15:52 Sen. Brown asked the council about presenting a curriculum for tribal schools to the Office of Public Instruction (OPI).

14:17:10 Mr. Messerly responded by stating that each tribe would have their own preferences as to what the curriculum should be in their schools.

14:19:25 Rep. Running Wolf went over the upcoming items on the agenda. (See attachment 1)

AGENCY INTRODUCTIONS AND UPDATES

14:21:53 Molly Plummer, Chief of Staff at the Montana State Auditor's Office, gave a presentation on the work and goals of the Commissioner's office.

14:31:54 Conner Gagnon, Elections Specialist for the Secretary of State, stated his purpose for the committee.

BREAK

14:33:32 Reconvened at 14:48:55

FEE-TO-TRUST REFRESHER

14:49:39 Pad McCracken, Research Analyst, presented the fee-to-trust refresher to the committee and FBIC. ([Exhibit 3](#))

14:53:18 Laura Sankey Keip, Committee Attorney, gave an update on satellite/alternate election offices on reservations across Montana. She discussed bills, directives, and settlement agreements regarding satellite/alternate election offices. ([Exhibit 4](#))

14:57:55 Rep. Running Wolf requested additional introductions from Blaine and Phillips County presenters and visitors.

Committee Questions/Discussion

15:01:53 Sen. Webber commented on the differences between the Wandering Medicine Settlement Agreement and the SOS Directive 01-2015 and asked about the differences in definitions between "alternate" election offices and "satellite" election offices.

15:03:13 Tammy Williams, Blaine County Clerk, stated the difference between a satellite office and an alternate office.

15:04:49 Mr. Morin commented on the Wandering Medicine Settlement Agreement.

15:06:38 Sen. Webber asked how many reservations have satellite offices.

15:06:57 Mr. Gagnon stated that there are 8 reservations with satellite offices.

15:07:31 Ms. Williams and Ms. Plumage corrected Mr. Gagnon, stating that Blaine county did not have satellite election offices, but rather alternate election offices.

15:07:40 Ms. Cuts The Rope described the negotiations between Blaine County and Ft. Belknap reservations in acquiring satellite election offices on the reservation.

15:09:18 Dolores Plumage, Blaine County Commissioner, responded to Ms. Cuts The Rope's comments and discussed the work she's done with the tribal council.

15:22:16 Frank DePriest, Blaine County Commissioner, responded to Ms. Cuts The Rope's comment.

15:23:13 Ms. Cuts The Rope clarified her previous comment regarding voting access on the reservation.

15:24:26 Sen. Webber asked Ms. Williams her opinion on mail-in ballots for her county.

15:26:53 Sen. Webber asked Ms. Cuts The Rope how the Indian voters felt about mail-in ballots.

15:30:26 Rep. Running Wolf asked Blaine and Phillips Counties if they had done an audit on voter fraud.

15:32:17 Ms. Williams said that Blaine County had not. Lynnel LaBrie, Phillips County Clerk, stated that Phillips County does a post-audit.

15:32:36 Rep. Smith stated his concerns for offices with no mail-in ballot options.

15:33:52 Ms. Plumage described the challenges facing communities with no mail-in ballot offices.

15:39:28 Rep. Sheldon-Galloway asked about individuals on the reservation without a physical address and how the county addresses those situations.

15:41:22 Sen. Brown asked the Blaine county clerk and commissioner if their county has representation from the reservation.

15:44:39 Sen. Brown asked if there are poll workers from the tribe.

15:45:08 Sen. Webber directed Sen. Brown's question to Ms. LaBrie.

15:46:08 Rep. Running Wolf asked the Council what the benefits are in having a reservation in trust.

15:48:51 Mr. Morin explained that having land in trust ensures that the land will remain a part of the reservation.

15:50:00 Mr. Fox stated that land in trust will ultimately allow for permanent homes to be built on the reservation.

15:50:30 Rep. Running Wolf asked about trust resource income and how banks leverage trust resource dollars.

15:51:13 Sen. Webber asked the Council about the reservation land that's in trust and if the Cobell land buyback worked for the reservation.

15:54:24 Bum Stiffarm, Research and Development Officer for Island Mountain Development Group, responded to Sen. Webber's question about the land buyback program.

15:56:33 Rep. Read commented on a possible solution to alleviate issues with the county, which included payment in lieu of taxes with fee-to-trust transfers of land.

15:59:40 Rep. Running Wolf responded to Rep. Read's comment.

16:01:12 Mr. DePriest commented on the effect that payment in lieu of taxes for land transfers from fee-to-trust would have on Blaine County.

16:03:02 Rep. Running Wolf responded to Mr. DePriest's comment.

16:03:08 Sen. Fox asked Mr. DePriest how much money the county gets for payment in lieu of taxes from the reservation. Sen. Fox stated that transferring reservation land from fee-to-trust was hindered by jurisdictional issues.

16:04:58 Mr. DePriest responded to Sen. Fox's question.

16:05:10 Mr. Messerly commented on the jurisdictional issues within the reservation and their submarginal lands.

16:08:00 Rep. Smith commented on undivided interest within the reservation.

DECENNIAL REPORT OPTIONS/BILL DRAFTS

16:09:17 Mr. McCracken deferred any updates on the Decennial Report until the committee's May meeting.

16:10:53 Sen. Fox asked for Mr. McCracken to update the committee on the focus of the work group.

16:11:32 Mr. McCracken stated the focus of the Decennial Report Work group.

16:12:20 Sen. Webber further explained the focus of the work group.

IEFA LITIGATION UPDATE

16:15:11 Ms. Sankey Keip gave an update on what remains in the process of the IEFA litigation.

Public Comment on any matter within STRC's jurisdiction

16:17:27 Bum Stiffarm, Ft. Belknap

Committee Questions/Discussion

16:24:35 Mr. Messerly mentioned the task order which setup the services and funds for the reservation's transit vehicles.

16:24:42 Rep. Smith commented on the funding that Mr. Messerly mentioned.

16:25:46 Rep. Running Wolf commented on the hospitality given from the tribal members of the FBIC.

16:27:04 Sen. Webber gave a closing prayer.

ADJOURNMENT

16:27:15 Rep. Running Wolf adjourned the meeting at 4:27pm.