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Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians

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March 5, 2007

Ms. Nancy Theodore
USDA, Food and Nutrition Service
Food Distribution Division
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 506
Alexandria, VA 22302

Dear Ms. Theodore:

Enclosed please find the testimony of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. We are part of the Western Regional Office of the USDA, Food and Nutrition Service. I presented this testimony during the January hearings in San Francisco, California, and am forwarding them to be included in the official record.

As presented in the testimony, we are opposed to the funding methodologies presented in the letter of November 28, 2006.

If you require further information, please call Brenda Bremner, General Manager, at (541) 444-8204.

Sincerely,


Delores Pigsley
Tribal Chairman

3/5/07
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**Testimony
of
Delores Pigsley
Tribal Chairman**

**Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians of Oregon
P.O. Box 549
Siletz, OR 97380**

Administrator Ng, and the FDPIR Funding Work Group, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today on the position of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians (Siletz Tribe) regarding the proposed funding methodology for the USDA Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR).

The Siletz Tribe opposes the proposed funding methodologies as outlined in the 11/28/06 letter for several reasons. The methodology proposed only affects tribal FDPIR's, but does not affect food stamp programs. The need for change outlined in the 1/30/07 meeting may not be addressed by this new methodology. If there are changes, or reduced funding, it should be equitable across all of the programs and should not target tribal programs. If it is just a reduction in funding, it needs to be so stated.

The methodology needs to account or allow for satellite offices or tailgate programs. Five (5) percent is not enough. The Siletz Tribe covers a 15-county service area, encompassing 23,671 sq. miles, in order to provide services to a large number of tribes and Indian people. We serve Indian people in urban and rural locations through 2 warehouses. Our main warehouse is in Siletz, with a satellite warehouse in Salem. Tribes need to count on a stable source of funding. These funding proposals would virtually eliminate stable funding for these warehouses, and cause a shutdown of our program leaving 250 clients without services.

Additionally, while tribal members have a choice whether to utilize the food stamp program or food distribution program, most prefer the services they receive through the FDPIR and choose that program versus food stamps. Tribes capitalize on their presence to provide nutritional counseling, food preparation classes, and information from related programs such as the diabetes program to improve the life of our tribal

members. (Eliminating the food distribution program will cut off a very important opportunity for personal contact with these families.)

Tribes are being asked to agree to a methodology without being provided adequate information with which to analyze the impact to our programs. Tribes were not provided with information on how their programs fit within the nationwide percentages of participation; nor were they provided with information on how the funding reallocation would affect their specific program. The USDA – FDPIR administration has this information and it should be provided to the tribes to analyze before this methodology is considered.

The proposed base amount is wholly inadequate. Even with the proposed percentage of federal outlays and unliquidated obligations, this leaves warehouses without adequate funds to operate. Whether a tribe has 20 clients or 2,000 clients, there are fixed costs that must be met – rent, utilities, staffing, and equipment. The proposed base will not supply the needs of any warehouse.

Tribes were provided an opportunity to review the proposals at the 2005 annual conference in South Dakota, and again in 2006. Our region summarily rejected these methodologies, yet the federal agency continues to push forward with yet another methodology. Tribes feel their voice is not being heard, and are concerned about having to continue to reject the same or similar proposals. Additionally, suggesting that funds be allocated to regions and requiring annual negotiations with each tribe will place tribes in a state of continual negotiations and unstable funding sources. No tribe can successfully operate under those circumstances. We believe that the USDA – FDPIR has an obligation to consult with each individual tribe regarding any funding methodology changes.

For all of the reasons stated above, I reiterate that the Siletz Tribe rejects the proposed funding methodologies and encourages the U.S. Department of Agriculture to consult with the tribes in the true sense of the term, and propose a better methodology that will allow for stable funding for tribal food distribution programs.

Again, thank you for providing me with the opportunity to present testimony today on behalf of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians.