

October, 2020

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
121 SW Salmon St., Suite 1400
Portland, OR 97204

RE: Senate Bill 3044, introduced by Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon and Sen. Jeff Merkley of Oregon, to amend the America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 to expand the Indian reservation drinking water programs, and for other purposes

Dear Senator Merkley:

My name is _____. I am an advocate of Senate Bill 3044 who resides in Oregon. The passing of this amendment is necessary and relevant for all Native American communities throughout the United States, not only in Oregon, as it affects Native American access to clean water, which is a basic necessity of life. I support this bill because without regular access to clean water, human life cannot be sustained. Native American communities must have regular access to clean water, not only for drinking, but also for personal hygiene and sanitation.

In Oregon on the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation, for example, the 4,296 residents have been without clean drinking water for three summers. After a patchwork repair of broken pipes, residents have had to boil all drinking water. In some areas of the reservation, there are people who do not have access to water to wash their hands. During the pandemic, the challenges with the water supply have grown exponentially. Many of these issues are caused by a 40-year-old water treatment plant and other unsatisfactory water infrastructures that are even older, including pipes that are made of wood and clay. Treaties are at the core of the water crisis. When the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs relinquished thousands of acres of their land to the Oregon Territory, they did so by agreeing to sign a treaty that stated the federal government would be responsible for infrastructure upkeep. The federal government has not lived up to its promises that were outlined in the treaty.

Recently, I was told by a visitor to the Warm Springs Reservation that she cannot imagine living so long in these conditions. She explained that "their water is barely working and (reservation leaders) were told to have a 30-day supply of bottled water for everyone on the reservation." Churches, outreach groups, and private individuals have been collecting and delivering water to the reservation, but this is simply not enough. The federal government must honor its treaty and maintain infrastructures that provide for regular access to clean water on all Native American reservations.

I urgently request that you vote to pass this amendment. The health, well-being, and possibly the lives of Native American people depend on it. I would be most grateful to receive a response from you regarding this issue.

Sincerely,

Name:
Address:
City/State/Zip Code: