



THE PAIUTE INDIAN TRIBE OF UTAH

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Immediate Release

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Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah Removes Chairwoman

The Tribal Council of the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah has unanimously voted to remove Gari Pikyavit Lafferty as chairwoman, because of actions that include taking personal gifts for herself and her family without council approval, and failing to act upon council direction.

“The role of a tribal official is to act to make the tribe better, but the actions of Gari Lafferty since she took office have served neither the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah nor its elected council,” said Vice Chairwoman Jeanine Borchardt. “Gari Lafferty’s actions served only her self-interest. We are deeply saddened in taking this action.”

The Tribe per its Constitution has set a special election on April 30, 2015, in which the tribal membership will elect a new chair from among the remaining council members. Results of the special election will be announced on May 1, 2015.

These actions of the tribal council follow a hearing on March 31, when Chairwoman Lafferty was allowed to respond to the notice of charges the Tribal Council brought against her. The Tribe’s constitution provides the Tribal Council with the authority to remove any council member, including the chairperson, for neglect of duty or willful misconduct after written notice of the charges and a hearing held by the tribal council.

In September 2014, Chairwoman Lafferty, accepted from the Washington football team free tickets to a game and travel expenses to Washington, D.C. for herself and several family members, mere days after the tribal attorney provided a Conflict of Interest training for the Tribal Council that expressly prohibited this exact conduct.

Specifically, the Tribe’s Ethics Ordinance prohibits tribal officials from soliciting or accepting gifts valued at over \$50. Chairwoman Lafferty both solicited and accepted gift as recorded in regular council tribal meetings, where she said that she had asked Gary Edwards of the Washington Redskins Original Americans Foundations for a football signed by Robert Griffin III. This is a gift valued anywhere between \$75-\$600, according to eBay and sports memorabilia sites.

She further admitted during the March 31 hearing that the Redskins flew her and several members of her family to the game, and paid for airfare, tickets, meals, and accommodations. There is no question based upon the national discourse on the team's name that her actions in accepting and soliciting these gifts could reasonably be inferred to influence her judgment and/or official actions, and to provide at least implicit support for the Redskins, support which is prohibited under the Ethics Ordinance.

Gari Lafferty has claimed that the Tribal Council knew she was going to the game. She testified that she gave a report to the Tribal Council that she let them know she was going back for the game. That is not true, and is not supported by the record.

"Gari Lafferty's involvement with the Washington football team and her actions tying the Tribe to this controversial team violate the Tribe's Ethics Ordinance and the Tribal Council Standards of Conduct," said Vice Chairwoman Jeanine Borchardt. "The Tribe's decision to remove the chairwoman was also based upon a larger pattern of behavior documented over a long period of time."

The Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah consists of five constituent bands: Cedar, Indian Peaks, Kanosh, Koosharem and Shivwits.

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