

**TESTIMONY OF
MIKE SMITH
DEPUTY DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE
S. 817, A BILL TO PROVIDE FOR THE ADDITION OF CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY TO THE
RESERVATION OF THE SILETZ TRIBE IN THE STATE OF OREGON**

OCTOBER 7, 2015

Chairman Barrasso, Vice Chairman Tester, and Members of the Committee, my name is Michael Smith and I am the Deputy Director for the Bureau of Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior. Thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's (Department) views on S. 817, a bill to provide for the addition of certain real property to the reservation of the Siletz Tribe.

Taking land into trust is one of the most important functions that the Department undertakes on behalf of Indian tribes. Homelands are essential to the health, safety, and welfare of the tribal governments. Thus, this Administration has made the restoration of tribal homelands a priority. This Administration is committed to the restoration of tribal homelands, through the Department's acquisition of lands in trust for tribes, where appropriate. While the Department acknowledges that tribes near the Siletz Tribe oppose S. 817, the Department supports S. 817.

S. 817 would amend the Siletz Tribe Indian Restoration Act, 25 U.S.C. § 711e, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to place land into trust for the Siletz Tribe. The lands lie within the original 1855 Siletz Coast Reservation and are located in the counties of Benton, Douglas, Lane, Lincoln, Tillamook, and Yamhill, which are all located within the State of Oregon. S. 817 would also provide that such land would be considered and evaluated as an on-reservation acquisition under 25 C.F.R. § 151.10 and become part of the Tribe's reservation. The bill does not make the original Siletz Reservation into a reservation for the Siletz Tribe or create tribal jurisdiction over the original Siletz Reservation. Additionally, S. 817 clarifies that nothing in this Act or amendment made by this Act shall prioritize for any purpose the claims of any federally-recognized Indian tribe over the claims of any other federally-recognized Indian tribe.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Department's views on this legislation. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.