



# MOAPA BAND OF PAIUTES

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UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF ALETHA TOM, CHAIRWOMAN OF THE MOAPA  
BAND OF PAIUTES, IN SUPPORT OF S. 2479 TO EXPAND MOAPA INDIAN  
RESERVATION**

July 9, 2014

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Good afternoon. I'm Aletha Tom, Chairwoman of the Moapa Band of Paiutes. The Tribe strongly supports Senate Bill 2479, and we deeply appreciate the efforts of the many people who have helped us move this forward, especially Senator Reid, and also Congressman Horsford, who has introduced a companion bill in the House.

The bill would restore about 26,000 acres to our Reservation. These are desert lands adjacent to our Reservation that are currently managed by BLM and the Bureau of Reclamation.

The lands were all part of our original Southern Paiute homeland, and were part of the original Moapa Reservation, which once comprised over 2,000,000 acres. Unfortunately, pressures from miners and settlers led Congress to shrink our Reservation in 1875 from over 2,000,000 down to only 1,000 acres. Our Reservation remained tiny until 1980, when Congress restored a small portion of our lands – about 70,000 acres – back to our Reservation. The current bill would continue this process by restoring around 26,000 additional acres.

The lands addressed in the bill are particularly important to us.

One portion, about 7,500 acres, is located near where most of us live on the Reservation. These additional lands will be directly useful for housing and community needs for our people.

Right now, housing is extremely scarce, and many of our young adults must move off the Reservation. These lands would give our young people an opportunity to stay home and contribute to our community.

A second portion, about 11,500 acres, is located just south of our main commercial development, a travel plaza with a convenience store and gas station. We see using these lands to enhance outdoor recreation and conservation opportunities. The plaza area is located along the natural path of Las Vegas's growth, on Interstate 15, by an exit which leads to the Valley of Fire, Nevada's oldest and largest state park.

A third portion, around 4,500 acres on the north side of the Reservation, has special significance to the Tribe and would be preserved for cultural purposes.

The remaining lands are purely desert areas that would be very useful for solar energy development. Our Tribe already has three solar projects in different stages of development. Our Reservation is uniquely situated to provide solar power in the region. We're located near powerlines and substations, as well as major markets which need extra energy exactly when the sun is shining most brightly, for air conditioning. Again, solar development would benefit both the Tribe and the greater community, and would increase the Tribe's stake in the prosperity of the region.

The bill specifically endorses these purposes – housing, recreation, and renewable energy development – as well as traditional and cultural uses and environmental stewardship. The bill also provides that the lands would not be used for gaming. We have no problem with that, although Indian gaming is not really an issue in Nevada.

We again want to thank Senator Reid and the committee. Not only would this bill help rectify past injustices, but it also gives, in a very practical way, hope to our people for the future.