

Where the power lies; the right of referendum



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Who has the real power in our tribe? There has been talk about

this for years, and everyone has their own opinion on this. I, like everyone else, have my own. There are two differences where the power of the tribe can be found: one is our Constitution, which is the supreme law of our tribe; the second is our laws and bylaws.

First, we have the chair, who has the everyday power to run the tribe. Second, the board of directors, which has oversight of all things that happens in the tribe. Third, the people of the tribe, who also put the elected chair and board to serve.

As we know, the chair has limited powers to run the tribe that is given to the chair by the Constitution and the board of directors. Even this power can be

overridden by the board of directors. So the chair is not the all mighty power place in the tribe.

The board of directors has close to unlimited power if a majority of the directors vote to do or change things or the way the tribe does business. The tribal members have the supreme power in all the board does. They get the power by the right of referendum. Anything the board does can be overturned by the members of our tribe.

The right of referendum is a major check and balance of the board, with only 100 signatures on a petition to put out a referendum to a vote of the people. Referendums are final. When the board of directors amended Chapter 16 to have a board mem-

ber or the chair removed from office, the signature requirement was raised from 100 signatures to 10 percent of voter signatures, which is a much harder task to accomplish. The number of signatures required to referendum didn't change even though they tried to change this at the same time. By not amending the referendum requirement to meet the same standard as the Chapter 16 requirement, the BOD left the power of referendum at an attainable level for the members to reach. Referendum is the biggest power our people have. No government allows this kind of power within such close reach to their people. This is the major check and balance in our tribe. Never let the tribal leaders

change this.

Now on the debt news, we are still paying off our debt at a good pace. We are down to \$22.1 million. We need to get out of debt and stay out of debt. We need to spend only what we have.

I want to thank all the candidates for their participation in our election and congratulations to the finalists, and a big thank you to all the voters.

After seven months of snow on the ground, the sun is shining. Have a great day and enjoy your summer!

If you have an issue to discuss or a concern, please contact me at DMcKelvie@saulttribe.net, (906) 632-7267 or (906) 203-6698.