

Unofficial results announced

Contributed by Michelle Bouschor
Friday, 28 January 2011

Sault Tribe Members Vote on two investment opportunities

SAULT STE. MARIE, Mich. — The Sault Tribe Election Committee has announced unofficial results for two referenda sent to eligible Sault Tribe members earlier this month. All completed ballots returned to the tribe by Jan. 27 were counted last night in a public meeting held at Kewadin Casinos Convention Center in Sault Ste. Marie.

One referendum sought to repeal Resolution 2010-226, "Equity Purchase of Energy Development Company Indian Energy LLC." The resolution was approved Oct. 26 by the Sault Tribe Board of Directors. The voters decided, by a vote of 2,597 to 2,383, to approve Resolution 2010-226, thereby upholding the board's action.

The other referendum sought to repeal Resolution 2010-249, "Pursuit of Settlement of a Land Claim with respect to property in the Romulus, Michigan Metropolitan Area." The resolution was approved Nov. 9 by the Sault Tribe Board of Directors. The voters decided, by a vote of 1,864 to 2,986, to not approve Resolution 2010-249, thereby overturning the board's action.

Anyone seeking to contest the results of the vote counts must submit his or her challenge to the Election Committee by the end of business on Jan. 31, 2011. Results will be certified and deemed official at the next board of directors meeting or within seven days of all challenges being resolved.

For this election, 14,417 ballots were sent to tribal members with 4,980 of voters returning their ballots on Resolution 2010-226 and 4,850 of voters returning their ballots on Resolution 2010-249.

"The board respects tribal membership's right to vote and the referendum process," said Sault Tribe Chairman Joe McCoy. "The board will continue to explore business and other investment opportunities across the state, including in Metro Detroit as provided in written agreements with former Govs. John Engler and Jennifer Granholm that can help the tribe achieve our goal of economic self-sufficiency. That's what we have been elected by the membership to do."

McCoy urged tribal members to get all of the facts on future proposed referenda. "We know that with both of these petitions, members were given both accurate and inaccurate information," McCoy said. "It is very important for those members of voting age to know the facts about any petition they sign."

McCoy said he hopes members understand that referendum elections are expensive and time consuming. The cost to the tribe of holding a referendum election is more than \$30,000.

"The tribe is a democracy and our members absolutely must have the power to put the actions of elected leaders to a vote of the membership," McCoy said. "But the referendum process is expensive to the tribe, so it is not something to take lightly. Holding a referendum is a serious and costly matter."

The tribe's seven-county service area is divided into five election units encompassing Mackinac, Chippewa, Luce, Delta, Alger, Schoolcraft, and Marquette counties. The right of referendum is provided for in the tribe's Constitution and is implemented by Chapter 12 of the Tribal Code. According to the code, an ordinance or resolution enacted by the board of directors can be submitted to a popular referendum by a petition signed by 100 eligible voters of the tribe.

The referendum ballot is a standard format. The tribe's resolution or ordinance as a whole is either approved or disapproved by the tribe's eligible voters. The referendum ballot asks a simple question:

Do you approve or disapprove of [name of ordinance or number of resolution]?
 APPROVE DISAPPROVE

According to the Tribal Code, at least 30 percent of the eligible voters must cast a ballot to make the results binding. If less than 30 percent of ballots are cast, the election is null and void.

The resolutions and Tribal Code are available online at www.saulttribe.com.