

## Redwood Valley Little River Band of Pomo Indians

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The Honorable Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senate  
331 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
Via fax to: (202) 228-4741; conf. no. (202) 224-3841

Dear Senator Feinstein,

The Redwood Valley Rancheria respectfully requests your support for S. 2484, the American Indian Welfare Reform Act of 2002, which reauthorizes and improves the operation of tribal welfare-to work programs that were authorized by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). Senator Max Baucus introduced S. 2484 on May 8, 2002, and it was referred to the Senate Finance Committee for consideration. Senators Tom Daschle and Tim Johnson are co-sponsors of the bill and were most recently joined by Senators Jeff Bingaman, Daniel Inouye and Thad Cochran as co-sponsors.

The American Indian Welfare Reform Act of 2002 is vitally important to the continued success of welfare reform throughout Indian Country and its surrounding communities. PRWORA provided for tribal administration of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and replaced the former Tribal Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) program with the Native Employment Works (NEW) program.

The Redwood Valley Rancheria does not administer its own TANF program or participate in a consortium TANF program because PRWORA did not provide sufficient funding to make the administration of our own programs feasible. S. 2484 addresses that problem by providing Tribal Capacity Grants aimed at improving tribal administrative capacity and information management systems as well as providing additional funding to the U.S. Department of Health and Social Services for technical assistance to tribes. Our members currently receive services through the Mendocino County Dept. of Social Services TANF program.

Recognizing that states will continue to serve individual Indians, S. 2484 provides for tribal consultation on state TANF plans in order to ensure equitable access.

Tribes and the State of California have developed excellent working relationships with respect to tribal administration of TANF programs. California has been the most supportive state of tribal TANF, providing technical assistance and financial contributions to tribal TANF programs. S. 2484 provides incentives to encourage other states to follow California's lead and also provides additional funds to states such as California that already support tribal TANF.

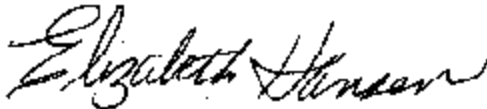


On the Redwood Valley Rancheria, the unemployment rate is very high and in Mendocino County employment opportunity is limited more monies and more training is needed for TANF precipitants. Studies have identified the lack of employment opportunities on or near reservations as one of the obstacles preventing successful job training participants from moving from welfare to work. S. 2484 also provides for Tribal Development Grants that will stimulate economic development throughout Indian Country.

The Redwood Valley Rancheria acknowledges that S. 2484 is vitally important to the continued success of welfare reform in Indian Country for several reasons. First, it recognizes the positive changes that tribal administration of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program has brought to Indian reservations of those Tribes that administer their own TANF. Second, S. 2484 contains several important provisions for improving upon the successes of tribal administration of the TANF program in Indian Country by providing for economic development and job creation activities. Third, it recognizes the substantial barriers that tribal members face in moving from dependency to self-sufficiency.

With your support, the provisions of S. 2484 can continue to be the catalyst for further success in moving Indian people from dependency to self-sufficiency and economic security. The Tribe strongly endorses S. 2484, and respectfully requests your support for S. 2484, the American Indian Welfare Reform Act of 2002.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Hansen, Tribal Chairperson  
Redwood Valley Rancheria