

# CALIFORNIA VALLEY MIWOK TRIBE

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## **Indian Tribe's Sovereignty and Relations with the United States damaged by US Senator's Intervention for over a Decade**

### **DEEP CONCERN THAT SENATOR FEINSTEIN INTERFERED IN TRIBAL GOVERNANCE**

*Disbelief as Senator's Interference Supports efforts to Install New Tribal Leadership and that Bolster's New Leadership's Plans to Build Casino in Bay Area*

### **Le Grange, CA, February 21, 2020 -- - California Valley Miwok Tribe of California, a federally recognized tribe**

On February 6, 2020, the Tribe sent Senator Diane Feinstein a letter requesting a response to the Tribe's concerns about the Senator's involvement in the Tribe's decade long struggle with the Department of the Interior. Senator Feinstein was given two weeks to provide a response. The Tribe received no response from the Senator or her staff.

The Letter revealed, "The Tribe has been made aware of information and documentation indicating that you have used your position as a United States Senator to pressure the United States Department of the Interior, on behalf of your political associates, about our Tribe. The effect of your involvement paves a path for your political associates to reap huge business and financial benefits by developing an "Indian casino" in the name of our Tribe in the San Francisco Bay Area."

That involvement comes in the form of two letters one sent in August 2007 and the other in March 2019 that resulted in the Bureau of Indian Affairs' about face on decisions that impacted Tribal governance and supported the wishes of a long-time associate of Senator Feinstein .

"This is of deep concern, and is especially disheartening." tribal Chairperson, Silvia Burley continued, "It's especially troubling knowing that we've been fighting gaming interests' efforts to take over our Tribe, but for years, it appears Senator Feinstein took actions behind closed doors that we knew nothing about." Chairperson Burley said.

“Senator Feinstein is a well-known and long-time opponent of urban Indian gaming projects, especially in the Bay Area,” Chairperson Burley said. “The Letters show that the Senator was assisting her long-time political associate who had plans to build a casino in the Bay area.”

The 2007 and 2019 letters serve as bookends to the current hiatus in government relations between the United States and the Tribe.

At one end is Senator Feinstein’s 2007 Letter. It requested, on behalf of “concerns” raised by a long-time Feinstein political associate, to take away federal funds and withdraw government relations with the Chairperson Burley, which the BIA subsequently complied.

Over the next decade, the United States, and a now deceased member and former leader of the Tribe, fought in courts for the Tribe to include more individuals as members in the Tribe. That former leader, Yakima Dixie, and other individuals, were associated with working on plans to build a casino in the San Francisco Bay Area since at least 2007. Mr. Dixie passed away, which should have ended the decade-long battle.

The 2019 letter, however, provides a bookend to the Tribal dispute. Senator Feinstein wrote again to the BIA expressing new concerns from the same long-time political associate referred to in the 2007 letter. Once again, the BIA acted and reversed decisions about the Tribe governance that the BIA had made just months earlier.

The Tribe finds the revelations both confounding and devastating. “I was shocked and anxiety-ridden. Our Tribe and its members barely skate by. The Tribe’s battle with the BIA has become personal and sad. And for what? So other, rich non-Indian people, can install leadership of their choice and reap the benefits of a casino.” Chairperson Burley said. “We only want to live in peace without the BIA interfering in our lives, so we can help our greater community.”

*The California Valley Miwok Tribe is a federally recognized tribe. The Tribe, formally known prior to 2001 as the Sheep Ranch Rancheria, is listed on all lists eligible to conduct relations with the United States from 1947 forward including the February 1, 2019 List. The Tribe and its current leadership have conducted relations at various times with the United States since adopting governing documents in 1998 with the assistance of Department of the Interior officials. The Tribe is landless and desperate to access congressionally mandated government programs to support its members. The Tribe and its leadership have no casino development deal and no plans to develop a casino.*

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