

## **Regional Councils and Legislative Districts**

– A great difference.

Last year you voted to amend our Constitution and gave those areas outside of Oklahoma actual territorial representation in our government. This is accomplished by video teleconferencing the Tribal Legislature. We are the first American Indian Tribe to ever do so in American history, to my knowledge. It was my extreme honor to have written that change in our Constitution in response to your requests for a greater voice in your government.

Our tribe gradually chose over the last 25 years to go outside of its original reservation lands and extend its jurisdiction in four ways: many forms of services (health aids, prescriptions, scholarships, burial costs, housing, etc.), the powers of the Tribal Court, the right to vote by absentee ballot, and informal government participation called “Regional Councils”. They were not in the Constitution. They were a creation of the Chairman’s office as an interim measure to reestablish the “tribal connection” with our citizens. The Regional Councils were also a way for our people who had not been active in their membership to re-connect with the Tribal culture. Ultimately, for our government, this led to the new Tribal Legislature. For our culture, it has lead to a rebirth of tribal traditions like our namings, language, and ceremony.

Started in 1985, the Regional Councils had “Representatives” who organized meetings at some central place in the area where they lived, and where there were significant populations of Citizen Potawatomi. These “Representatives” were appointed by me as the Tribal Chairman. Since they were not in the Tribal Constitution, they did not participate in the governmental operations of the Tribe. They had no constitutional powers. They did not run for election. They did not vote on Tribal Resolutions or Ordinances, approve budgets, or even attend meetings of the Business Committee except on occasion as members of the public. Their job was to hold the annual meetings and field calls from members in their area.

Many of the Regional Council Representatives who served in their appointed rolls for many years are cherished friends and supporters: Lu Ellis, Marge Hobdy, Cheryl DeGraff, Gene Lambert, Craig Anderson, Lyman Boursaw, and Jim Higbee. They were, and are, a great help in outreach to tribal members. I am happy that Gene Lambert went on to run for the Tribal Legislature in District #5 and win. While her new position is very different from her former one, she has a strong business background and many years of knowing her constituents as an advantage.

Others have had the Regional Director’s job, including Finch, a candidate for Tribal Chairman, and Thom Finks, his brother, who is running his campaign. A few served for a brief period of time, such a Chuck Goyer, who was not an enrolled tribal member until fall of 2001 and had never been to Oklahoma or seen the Tribal operations. I appointed Goyer as Regional Council Representative in Southern California because he was the only volunteer at the time. I knew the Tribal Constitution was about to change to create the new Legislative Districts and eliminate his position. His son, Ron Goyer, wasn’t a tribal member until 2003. He ran unopposed for a shortened term in the Tribal Legislature which expires next year. The filing period for that position begins in January of 2010. I hope many of you in Southern California will consider standing for election and, if elected, serving in that tribal office.

Pleas encourage your family to vote and lead by example in sending for your ballots now. I ask for your votes in this election for Tribal Chairman and the privilege of serving another term of office. It is an honor to serve you as Tribal Chairman and I appreciate your many expressions of support. Megwetch,

John Rocky Barrett Keweoge  
Tribal Chairman