

# Osage Election Board Meeting July 5, 2012

A meeting was held earlier today at the Osage Nation Election Board offices to address the concerns of several persons about the Board's efforts to control campaigning on ballot issues. Attending were Chairman Walter Hopper Jr., vice Chair Shannon Lockett, Election Board member Terry Hazen, Election Supervisor Alexis Rencountre, Osage Minerals Council Chairman Galen Crum, Osage News staff writer Benny Polloca, Osage Nation Executive Department Legislative and Legal Analyst Ashlee Morton, Osage Nation Assistant Attorney General Clint Patterson, and Osage Shareholders Patricia Bright and Ray McClain.

I was recognized first. I asked the Chairman to explain the Board's official position on regulating personal web sites which may put forth positions on ballot issues. He first stated that all campaigning was subject to the rules and regulations of the Election Board. Patricia Bright raised a point about encroaching upon personal free speech rights with this rule. As the debate wore on, it seemed that maybe the entire Board had overlooked the fact that personal web sites received no financial support from their readers and were normally used for purposes other than campaigning for or against ballot issues. To make a long story short, for the above reasons, it was decided that personal web sites and personal news letters would not be subject to regulation by the Election Board.

Osage Minerals Council Chairman Galen Crum presented the MC's case for the MC using their web site to explain the Constitutional Amendments to the public. The point of his presentation was that the MC should also be exempt from regulation of their own publication on their own web site pages. It seemed that his presentation was very well-taken. No immediate decision on this issue was forthcoming however, and the matter was referred to the Attorney General's office for recommendations.

Hopefully, Mr. Polloca will have something about this meeting in the Osage News soon. I'm sure his rendition will contain much more detail.

I have 2 points to make here:

1. Had Ms. Bright not brought attention to the personal web site issue last week, and if I had not written the letter to Mr. Hopper stating my concern, this rule might have gone straight into the books with no further thought about it. At least until they tried to enforce that rule on some unsuspecting, but concerned individual. I received a little criticism for being concerned about this issue, but I might have expected that. I never made the statement that "it was a rule." I merely suggested that it was being considered. And sure enough, it was.

2. This is an example of what a very small number of individuals can do if they will just take the time to get interested and voice their opinions in a reasonable and rational manner. If you are making sense, they will listen. If you do not make any sense to them, they will only hear you (and usually from a great distance).

I will take this opportunity to thank the Osage Election Board for hearing me today, and listening. You have a huge responsibility and you are doing a very good job.