



House approves Chumash Camp 4 trust legislation

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Legislation regarding the placement of land into trust to address housing needs, the Santa Ynez Valley Band of Chumash Indians passed yet another hurdle Tuesday, after it unanimously passed the U.S. House of Representatives. The bill, H.R. 1491, also known as the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians Land Affirmation Act of 2017, now heads to the Senate. If passed there, it will go to President Donald Trump for his signature.

The legislation ratifies the January decision by the Secretary of the Interior to place 1,400 acres of land, known as Camp 4, into trust, a decision that has caused controversy in the rural Santa Ynez Valley. Since purchasing the property in 2010, the Chumash tribe has sought to place the land in trust so that it can build housing for its membership, according to Tribal Chairman Kenneth Kahn.

"Camp 4 is about tribal housing on tribal land, it's about preserving our Chumash culture, and it's about bringing tribal members home," Chairman Kahn said in a statement.

"We are pleased that H.R. 1491 continues to move forward and we look forward to the day that it becomes law."

The Santa Ynez Valley Coalition, an organization that has expressed concerns about the tribe taking the land into trust, reiterated its opposition to the legislation citing the bill's "far-reaching and negative consequences that would impact not only the Santa Ynez Valley, but communities throughout the country."

Representatives of the organization have said they believe the legislation could allow the tribe to potentially develop a massive commercial development or entertainment complex and that it could potentially override local zoning and land-use controls.

"The citizens who live in this area have a strong interest in preserving its character, as well as their property rights and quality of life," said Bill Krauch, Chair of the Santa Ynez Valley Coalition. "Any major development, such as major commercial development or even ultimately a casino resort will put a significant strain on the current infrastructure, and local taxpayers will end up footing the bill because the tribe is exempt from paying property and sales taxes."

H.R. 1491 included an amendment with the recently adopted memorandum of agreement between the tribe and the County of Santa Barbara regarding the Camp 4 land. As part of the agreement, the county Board of Supervisors pledged to support H.R. 1491 and drop its federal lawsuit. Fourth District Supervisor Peter Adam was the lone dissenter when the board adopted the agreement at the end of October, calling it a "bad deal for the county." The agreement outlines specifics for development on the annexed property, like providing buffers from the adjacent highway, restrictions on water, and an annual payment from the tribe to the county to offset the loss of taxes that the county will incur once the property becomes part of the reservation. The agreement will remain in effect through 2024. In his dissenting vote, Mr. Adam said the agreement benefits the tribe more than the county.

"What does the county get? A buffer zone along [Highway] 154 and \$178,000 a year, which isn't even inflation adjusted," Mr. Adam said. "What does the tribe get? Unlimited services at no additional cost. Great deal for the tribe, not a great deal for the county," he said.

Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-Santa Barbara, was among the legislators voting on Tuesday. He addressed the agreement and the legislation in a statement:

"The locally negotiated agreement concerning Camp 4 between the Chumash Tribe and Santa Barbara County is an important step toward establishing a long-term collaborative relationship between all parties involved. I am grateful to see the agreement reflected in the amended version of H.R. 1491, which will allow the tribe to provide housing for its members while mitigating the impacts on the surrounding community," Rep. Carbajal said.

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