

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS



Senate to hold hearing on Chumash's Camp 4 deal

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A hearing has been scheduled in the U.S. Senate for a bill that would allow the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians to add more than 1,400 acres of land to its reservation in the Santa Ynez Valley .

The Senate's Committee on Indian Affairs will hold the hearing April 25 to take testimony from the affected community.

If the bill becomes law, the land will be given over to the tribe through what is called a fee-to-trust transaction, annexing it to the Chumash reservation.

The property, known as Camp 4, is near the intersection of State Routes 154 and 246. It was purchased by the tribe in 2010.

The hearing was requested by California Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris, following a February visit to Washington D.C. by a delegation from the Santa Ynez Valley Coalition.

The coalition, which opposes the Camp 4 annexation, met with various senators and staff to press its case against the bill, HR 1491.

"The fact that the committee pulled the bill for a hearing - and has invited opposing testimony - underscores the seriousness of the problems with the Camp 4 deal and the potential adverse consequences, not only to the residents in the Santa Ynez Valley but across the nation as well," said Bill Krauch, coalition chair, in a statement.

According to the coalition, communities across the country face similar impacts from "fee to trust" land transfers. The transfer of private lands into trust by the federal government on behalf of Native American tribes allows them to circumvent local and state land use regulations. All other private property owners must comply with these regulations.

When coalition members met with various congressional officials in February, they pointed out serious problems with the proposal, as well as the planned development of the 1,400 acres.

One of their primary concerns is the "hasty, one-sided" land use agreement the

tribe negotiated with the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors, which had previously opposed the project.

Under the threat of enactment of HR 1491, the supervisors reversed themselves after a raucous public meeting and voted 4-1 to approve the Camp 4 development.

"There are just too many questions to let this piece of special interest legislation slide through Congress without taking a good, hard look," Mr. Krauch said.

The Memorandum of Agreement with the county permits the tribe to build 140 homes and a 12,000-square-foot community center with 250 parking spaces, which is eight times the number called for under normal building codes, according to the coalition.

The agreement also only obligates the tribe to pay the county \$178,500 a year to offset the financial impact of its development. That amount, according to the coalition, is far less than the real cost of the anticipated impact on public safety, local roads and other county services.

"Santa Ynez Valley residents must pick up the rest of the tab," the coalition says.

For more information, visit www.SYVCoalition.com.

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