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May 18, 2021

The Honorable Teresa Leger Fernandez
U.S. House of Representatives
1432 Longworth House Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: H.R. 2930 - SUPPORT

Dear Chairwoman Leger Fernandez:

On behalf of the Habematolel Pomo of Upper Lake (HPUL), a federally recognized tribal nation, I write in support and appreciation of H.R. 2930, which seeks to enhance protections of Native American artifacts and cultural heritage items.

Habematolel fully supports the introduction of H.R. 2930, also known as the STOP Act, and commends you and Senator Heinrich's recognition of the problem of theft and illegally trafficked sacred tribal patrimony for profit. Our Tribe is unfortunately quite familiar with these issues due to the large bounty of Native American prehistoric artifacts that reside on our lands.

Located in Upper Lake, California, our Tribal lands are surrounded by Clear Lake, California's oldest and largest freshwater lake, with rolling mountains and lush forests and plant life. Together, all of these rich resources have created an ideal location for several tribes throughout history, including Habematolel, dating back over 14,000 years.

Over time, archeologists have discovered hundreds of thousands of cultural artifacts in and around the area where the first of our Tribal members lived for centuries. From hunting tools to jewelry to baskets to the bones of our ancestors, all of these items tell the story of our history, and they belong with our people. For years, our Tribe and others struggled to deal with a large network of looters raiding our lands and stealing these items to sell on the black market, as well as developers and construction workers using bulldozers on our sacred sites without any consultation with our Tribe, resulting in the loss or destruction of many historic items.

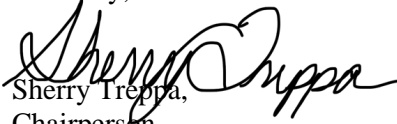
As you know, the removal of these artifacts is not only a crime, but also threatens to erase our already largely undocumented history. To address these violations, in 2018 my Tribe and Koi Nation, also located on Clear Lake in the Lower Lake area, along with an archeologist and video producer from California State University, Chico began working to produce a documentary which follows our efforts to protect our sacred sites against archeological crimes.

Those efforts involved the education of and collaboration with local officials over several years, eventually resulting in a Memorandum of Understanding between four local tribes and the City of Clearlake and Lake County which established an agreement to protect sacred sites through the development process and prosecute archaeological crimes. Now, Tribes in our area must be consulted before any development project begins on our lands. County and city officials also participated in cultural training in order to better understand and identify these crimes as they occur.

The documentary, called *Saving the Sacred*, has been nominated for an Emmy Award in the Best Documentary, Historical/Cultural category. We are thrilled about the nomination, but more importantly, we are proud of the work we have done in our community to ensure that our Native American culture is protected and preserved, and that our efforts were successful in spreading awareness about this problem.

It is for all of these reasons that my Tribe and I understand why H.R. 2930 is so vital to tribes across the country, and I am hopeful that the documentary (sent to your staff) will be a resource in your efforts in furthering this legislation. Please feel free to pass it along to committee members or staff for review. Thank you, once again, for your advocacy on behalf of Tribes. The Habematolel Pomo of Upper Lake Tribe looks forward to continuing to work with your office in the future to promote the interests of Indian Country. If we can be of any assistance, please let us know by contacting me or my team.

Sincerely,


Sherry Treppa,
Chairperson,
Habematolel Pomo of Upper Lake