

Before the
Multnomah County Board of Health
October 27th, 2011

Policy Order 101111 to Ban Bisphenol-A

Testimony of
Lewis Pitt, Jr., Government Affairs & Planning Director
Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon

Good morning, Chair Cogen and members of the Multnomah County Board of Health. My name is Lewis Pitt, Jr., of the Wal'tala people of the Columbia. I am the Director of Government Affairs, Planning, and Tribal Relations for the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon. Thank you for proposing action to protect our children from drinking bisphenol-A. Many of them live in your county because of their parents work; Multnomah County has the 3d highest number of Warm Springs tribal members after Jefferson and Wasco.

At Warm Springs, we cherish water as the first gift from the Creator. We start all of our ceremonies with water and thankfulness for water. We start all of our meals with a toast, as you would say, to water, by saying "Chush", and drinking water before starting to eat. Our word for water, "chush", is also a deeply felt expression of thanksgiving for all that water does for us. We are proud of our clean water, flowing from the mountains through our lands, down to the Deschutes River and the Columbia.

Now we learn that our precious young ones have had their water sullied for decades by a strange chemical, bisphenol-A. We learn that it is something like estrogen; an endocrine disrupter that in very small amounts contributes to obesity, cancer, thyroid problems and other problems in our children. This chemical is in the baby bottles and plastic cups that our children drink from. We do not understand why any baby bottles and cups and water containers should contain such a chemical.

We already have a deadly epidemic of diabetes and a high incidence of obesity, which we have recently understood contributes to diabetes. In recent years, we are also seeing an alarming amount of early sexual development in girls on the Reservation. We do not know why this should happen. The Reservation water supply is the Deschutes River and there is no upstream industry producing BPA. Sippy cups and baby bottles are the only known source of this chemical going into our infants.

Policy Order 101111 addresses a serious problem, how to protect our children from a cause of disease. It will reduce a source of contamination in our precious children. We ask the Board of Health to help us to bring our children's health problems under control and prevent further harm by approving Policy Order 101111.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you with our concerns.