



LEECH LAKE BAND of OJIBWE

LEECH LAKE TRIBAL POLICE DEPARTMENT

200 Sailstar Drive
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Cass Lake, MN 56633

Phone: (218) 335-8277
Toll Free: 888-622-9225
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Crime Prevention

Animal Control

Underage Drinking Enforcement

Traffic Enforcement

Meth Awareness

Data Records Management

Bicycle Safety

Criminal Investigations

Narcotics Investigations

Domestic Violence/Sexual
Assault Investigations

Predatory Offender Crimes

K9 Division

School Resource Enforcement

Casino Gaming Enforcement

Crimes Against Children

Emergency Management

Chief of Police
Kenneth Washington

Assistant Chief of Police
Michael G. Robinson

Administrative Officer
Natasha Thompson

Chair Mariani, Members of the Committee thank you for allowing me to testify on behalf of House File 1378.

My name is Ken Washington. I am currently the Chief of Police for the Leech Lake Tribal Police Department. I have worked at the Tribal Police Department since 2003.

The Leech Lake Tribal Police Department was originally established in 1999 as the Public Safety Division of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. The Department was founded to enforce civil regulatory laws on the Leech Lake Indian Reservation. In 2000 a Law Enforcement Agreement was entered into between the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and the four counties that overlap reservations boundaries. These counties include Beltrami, Cass, Hubbard, and Itasca. This Agreement is still in effect today.

The Leech Lake Tribal Police Department is fully functioning like any other Department including a fully staffed dispatch center that is open (24) hours a day seven (7) days a week. Our Department employs approximately (30) sworn Police Officers and seventeen (17) civilian positions. The Department has a patrol division consisting of two (2) Sergeants and (2) Senior Officers in Charge watching over fifteen Patrol Officers. The Department includes specific areas of coverage including School Resource Officers for multiple local schools on the Reservation, two (2) Highway Safety Officers for extra enforcement with impaired drivers and traffic accidents as well as a Gaming Officer specific to local Casino/Hotels.

The Investigation Division consists of six (6) Investigators who specialize in specific areas such as Human Trafficking, Sexual Assaults, Narcotics/Violent Crime, and General/Financials. These Investigators work side by side with partnering Agencies daily and on their own with Felony level cases. While each Investigator has a specific area of expertise, they all are able to contribute when serious calls for immediate service arise on and nearby the Leech Lake Reservation. We have multiple Investigators who currently work on both State and Federal Drug Task Forces and have Special Agent statuses.

Our Department patrols approximately 1,000 square miles that cover portions of all four counties. The Leech Lake Reservation is the largest Reservation in the State with the number of on-Reservation residents. Our Officers confront and respond to the same calls for service as any other Law Enforcement Agency daily.

Our Department provides the same service to the Leech Lake Band Members as it does to any citizens living on or near the Leech Lake Reservation. Our Department is continually seeing an increase in calls for service with the Department averaging over 10,000 calls a year. We are continually called on by our partnering Agencies for assistance in handling calls on the Reservation and nearby the Reservation.

As part of the Agreement, Officers of the Leech Lake Tribal Police Department are required to be licensed by the Minnesota Board of Peace Officer Standards and Training (MN POST Board) The Officers of the Leech Lake Tribal Police are held to the same exact standards as every other Peace Officer in the State of Minnesota. From the initial educational requirements to certification by POST, to continuing education credits, Our Officers are bound to the same policies and rules as every other law enforcement agency.

The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe is seeking this change in legislation to reflect the progress our Department has made since its formation over twenty (20) years ago. Our Department continues to work side by side daily on calls for service with the overlapping counties, yet the statue, as it currently reads, requires our Department to have an Agreement with the local Sheriff's to operate. This should not be the case, as it allows a county, which is a non-sovereign entity, the ability to dictate to a sovereign entity, our Federally recognized Tribal Government. The language in HF 1378 fixes this inequality and will allow our Department the independence to continue to provide the quality services to the public and citizens of the Leech Lake Reservation. We are asking to be recognized just as a local law enforcement municipality would be within a county.

I urge you to pass this legislation. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today. If you have any specific questions, would be happy to answer them. Miigwech! (Thank You).

Sincerely,



Chief Kenneth Washington