



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Matt Ricchiazzi
(716) 548-3371

Event: **Horseback Procession to City Hall**
Location: Beginning at Emma Prusch Park
(King Road at Story Road, enter from Story Road)
Date: August 13, 2024
Time: 2:30 pm procession line up; 3:00 pm procession departure

Event: **Announcement and Rally**
Location: San Jose City Hall – Plaza Space Outside of the Rotunda
Date: August 13, 2024
Time: 4:00 pm rally

GOP backs Muwekma Ohlone Tribe's status clarification, slams Rep. Lofgren for obstructing municipal resolution

San Jose City Council delays passage of a Resolution at Lofgren's request, raising questions about casino-related political corruption

(SAN JOSE, CA) – The South Bay's Republican Party is backing the **Muwekma Ohlone Tribe's** status clarification through congressional legislation, and officials plan to announce their support at a rally outside San Jose City Hall at 2:30 pm, during the Council's regular Tuesday session.

The backing comes after four Democratic Party organizations have formally endorsed an affirmation of the Tribe's federal status (San Francisco County, Contra Costa County, Santa Clara County, and Santa Cruz County).

Peter Hernandez, the Republican challenging Rep. **Zoe Lofgren** in California's 18th congressional district, is set to back legislation that will affirm the Tribe's federal status. The longtime congresswoman is the subject of intense criticism for her mistreatment of the Tribe, which includes a January 2023 conversation on Capitol Hill in which Lofgren demanded that Tribal Chairwoman **Charlene Nijmeh** sign away a vast swath of the Tribe's rights and freedoms in exchange for legislation that would correct the federal government's mistake.

Corrina Powers, the President of the California Chapter of the **Republican National Hispanic Association** (RNHA), and **Shane Patrick Connelly**, the Republican Party Chairman of Santa Clara County will also be endorsing the Tribe's status clarification

The Tribe was previously federally recognized as the **Verona Band of Alameda County**, was never terminated by an act of Congress, and 100% of its members descend from that previously recognized Tribe. But the **Bureau of Indian Affairs** erred in omitting Muwekma from the original 1978 list of officially recognized Tribes. In the four decades since, the Tribe has struggled to get the federal government to correct its mistake.

In recent days, the Hernandez campaign circulated this statement:

Rep. Zoe Lofgren turned her back on the Muwekma Ohlone people, betraying one of the most marginalized and historically maligned populations in our State. Her horrific behavior continues California's genocide against this community with her cold, callous, and extortionate behavior. Unlike the lust for control and demands of submission that typify Rep. Lofgren's behavior, I will take the opposite approach.

I believe deeply in bottom-up government. I believe that communities should be self governing – whether the City of Hollister, Santa Clara County, or the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. Local decisions should be in the hands of local communities. The decentralization of power and decision-making will be my driving policy approach to every challenge, including this challenge of justice for one of the most marginalized indigenous populations in California.

In prepared remarks, Chairwoman Nijmeh plans to say, in part:

I am so happy to see such a young, dynamic, and understanding leader of our region emerging. His name is Peter Hernandez and his willingness to tackle complicated decades-long problems – that the entrenched Democrats in the Bay Area continue to ignore – is refreshing.

When I first met Peter and I asked him to help my People affirm our existence in the eyes of the federal government, I found a compassionate business leader who wants to solve problems, to empower communities, and to serve the people of his district.

Rep. Zoe Lofgren on the other hand turned her back on the Muwekma Ohlone people years ago. She cares about the Big Money and Silicon Valley powerbrokers – with little regard or concern for the challenges faced by the region's indigenous and Mexican American communities.

When Rep. Zoe Lofgren first ran for Congress, our Tribe backed her in a big way. My mother was the Chairwoman of the Tribe at the time. We endorsed her. We raised money for her. We organized a Get Out the Vote program for her.

She promised to restore our status. She demanded it in her remarks on the House Floor. Then she got bought-off by special interest money that is funded, in large part, by the 68 Indian casinos that are operating in California – who have their feet on the necks of California's most marginalized Indian tribes.

Her behavior is typical of California's historic treatment towards indigenous people. Her silence and attempted political erasure of the Muwekma people is just a continuation of the genocide that has been waged against us. During the Gold Rush, our genocide was motivated by mining companies, railroad barons, and cattle ranchers.

Today our continued genocide comes in the form of political erasure, and it's motivated by politicians who need campaign contributions from casino executives to win their reelections.

I've always been a proud Democrat deeply concerned with social justice, environmental protection, and the quality of life of working-class communities.

So what does it say about Today's Democratic Party When Republican Peter Hernandez shares my concerns so much more than Democrat Rep. Lofgren ever will?

I am proud to endorse Peter Hernandez for Congress – and in the coming days my Tribal Council will be voting on a Resolution to offer him our official endorsement as well!

The Muwekma Ohlone Tribe is comprised of all surviving indigenous lineages aboriginal to the greater San Francisco Bay region. The Tribe's ancestors were forcibly enslaved in feudal agrarian systems at Missions Delores, Santa Clara and San Jose.

A **Stanford University** genomic study conclusively confirms that the tribe's members trace their DNA to the 2,500 year-old ancestors at a pre-contact village site in the San Francisco Bay Area in a study affirming the tribe's continuing presence in their aboriginal territories.

The Tribe has been landless since before California was acquired by the United States and aboriginal title was extinguished by the Congress. Despite federal laws mandating that Bureau of Indian Affairs was to purchase land for our Tribe, an Indian Agent at the Sacramento agency unilaterally and illegally politically erased the Tribe by removing them from the list of tribes to receive land as mandated by Congress.

Tribal members have suffered disproportionately from homelessness, housing uncertainty, and residential displacement. Now, with the ongoing gentrification of Bay Area homelands, housing prices threaten to decimate the Tribe, prevent the ability to live as a Tribe, and be pushed out of homelands into a diasporic existence.

The federal government has a clear trust responsibility to prevent the threat that California's housing and land use policies pose to the Tribe.

The Muwekma Ohlone Tribe has broad-based support from virtually everyone in the Bay Area.

Many universities have expressed their support for the Tribe, including **Stanford University**, **University of California at Berkeley**, **Santa Clara University**, **San Jose State University**, and many others.