

Editor:

Diane Watson, a California congresswoman, brought her dog-and-pony show to Tulsa and Muskogee this past week to recruit supporters for her legislation to sever government-to-government relations with the Cherokee Nation. (See "Congresswoman rips citizenship revocation," Aug.21)

However, her grandstanding may have cost her more than she planned. Her credibility began to suffer when she could not answer simple questions nor discuss the details of the Treaty of 1866, the treaty on which she based HR 2824, the house bill she is trying to sell to the rest of Congress.

Watson has hung her reputation on a misinterpretation of that treaty that gave freedmen land rights, not citizenship rights. She also failed to explain how she decided which group of African-Americans to discriminate against.

Currently, there are more than 1500 Black Cherokees who are tribal citizens who will suffer, along with the rest of the tribe, the consequences of her proposed legislation to cut off funding to the Cherokee Nation. Why is she giving preferential treatment to those African-Americans who cannot show they have Indian ancestors over those who can?

Watson's credibility continued to crumble when she was questioned about a recent NPR radio interview in which she declared she was a descendent of Pocahontas. When questioned, Watson did not even know the name of her supposed tribe.

During the Oklahoma meetings, Watson declared to be Cherokee, and then later declared she was a freedman (descendant of slaves). So, Diane, which is it? And, what happened to being Powhatan?

In another recent NPR interview on Native America Calling, Watson got her facts incorrect again when she declared that the Cherokee Nation has hundreds of casinos. Wrong. The number is seven.

The good thing about the fifteen minutes of fame Watson got from the half-page spread in the Tulsa World is that the public that used to be sympathetic to her cause is now seeing the truth and turning their backs on her and her followers. Once the rest of Congress sees the videotape of these two meetings, they, too, will see the truth about her and her ridiculous legislation. By the way, wonder who paid for her and her entourage (that included three congressional police officers) to travel from Washington to Oklahoma? Do you suppose her constituents in California don't care how much tax money she throws away on frivolous trips?

There is one thing Watson should have learned when she came face-to-face with fluent Cherokee-speaking Cherokees in Muskogee. We are a proud people and we do not succumb to blackmail-type threats, i.e., make the non-Indian freedmen

citizens or I will cut off your federal funding.

For the record: Indian people have persevered and survived for centuries, long before the white man brought slaves to this continent. And, we will continue to survive now.

Sara Hoklotubbe
Cherokee citizen