

Chalk one up for the Indians

Chalk one up for the Indians. We won! The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux now have the right to vote in all elections held on Prior Lake, Minn. and the residents of the small reservation are eligible for such essential city services as police, fire and rescue services.

The United States Supreme Court, on Feb. 24, refused to hear an appeal from the city of Prior Lake. The action by the Supreme Court upheld two previous court ruling favorable to the Sioux.

The case began in 1983 when the city passed a resolution calling for the redistricting of voting boundaries. The city action then drew of lines around the reservation which put the reservation outside the city limits even though it is inside the city limits.

On a map, it looked like a doughnut with the reservation being the doughnut hole. The ordinance then denied the reservation residents the right to vote and denied them free police, fire and rescue protection services.

The leaders of the tribe went to court in an effort to regain their right to vote and to force the city to provide these vital services to tribal members. The tribe had been paying the city for those services for years. Municipal services should have been provided without charge to all residents within the city limits of Prior Lake.

The tribe won its case in court, the appeals court and now the Supreme Court. The city of Prior Lake can no longer refuse the residents of the reservation the right to vote or deny essential services such as police, fire and rescue protection.

In court, the city claimed it didn't have to provide those city services because the people living on the reservation didn't pay city taxes and they couldn't pay city taxes and they couldn't vote because residents of Prior Lake couldn't vote in Sioux elections. Now isn't that one of the silliest ideas you ever heard?

The city somehow forgot about the tribe being the largest employer inside the Prior Lake city limits. The Sioux own the profitable Little Six Bingo Hall which provides many jobs and livelihood for Prior Lake residents and economic benefits to the city. But since the reservation residents didn't pay taxes, the city decided to deny them the right to vote and city services.

The city and their highly paid lawyers also overlooked the 1924 law giving Indians citizenship in the United States and therefore citizenship in every political subdivision in the United States.

The city, which gave the state of Minnesota an example of poor leadership and racism, now has to pay about \$25,000 in legal fees, lose a \$14,000 contract with the tribe for municipal



services and is now forced to provide those services to the reservation free of charge.

I would have liked to have seen the court fine or jail the city leaders and ordered to pay punitive damages of \$1 million for violating the constitution and attempting to deny a constitutionally protected right. The only thing non-Indian government leaders seem to understand these days is money.

Prior Lake residents should be outraged at the wasted city dollars in the foolish quest by their city leaders. November would be a good time for Prior Lake citizens and residents of the reservation to band together in the name of good and responsible government to make sure those city leaders will not be around to waste city dollars.

The actions by the city leaders could be called malfeasance. The people of good will could ask the Minnesota attorney general to begin proceedings to remove the city officials. Such a move by the attorney general would be good for the community, the state and nation to remind the rest of the government leaders in the country such terror tactics will not be tolerated by the majority of people who believe in good

government.

The attorneys who lead the elected city officials down the path of racism should be brought before the state ethical practice board for their action in this manner. The charge could be the misuse of the law in pursuit of a criminal activity.

The move by the city in denying Indians the right to vote and also denying them essential city services was premeditated criminal activity. Those responsible for using the law in such a manner should no longer be allowed the high honor of practicing law.

There is no way in the world anyone can justify the use of the law to discriminate against a whole group of people by an attempt to deny them their constitutionally protected right to vote and attempting to cause the wrongful death of reservation residents by refusing to provide police, fire and rescue services.

We have won an important victory in the U.S. Supreme court. The court had enough sense to refuse to waste their time on such an ill-conceived court challenge.

It's really a shame the whole thing had to go to court in the first place. This whole sorry, sad incident should not be forgotten by anyone.

This case should be seen as an example of how easy it is for anyone to have their rights violated by a group of small-minded bigots and how hard it is to regain those rights. But more than that, this case shows we must be on guard every moment in our efforts to preserve our rights.

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