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Press Release

On November 21, 2016, the Federal Court of Indian Offenses affirmed the Seneca-Cayuga Nation's Business Committee's finding that LeRoy Howard, a candidate for Chief, failed to meet the Seneca-Cayuga Nation's Constitutional requirements for tribal membership, as required in the Tribal Election Ordinance. The Election Ordinance requires a candidate for office to meet the Constitutional requirements for Tribal membership within the Seneca-Cayuga Nation in addition to the Constitutional requirements for office. That Ordinance requires at Article VII, Section 7(a):

A prospective candidate for elective office of the Seneca-Cayuga Nation must meet all of the requirements contained within Article III, membership of Nation, in addition to Article II of the By-Laws to the Constitution of the Seneca-Cayuga Nation as follows:

- (1) Be not less than twenty-five (25) years of age;
- (2) Be a member of the Seneca-Cayuga Nation; and
- (3) Reside within a radius of one hundred fifty (150) miles in any direction from the Basset Grove Stomp Grounds.

Howard's nephew and counsel, Scott B. Goode, addressed the issue of Howard's failure to satisfy Tribal membership requirements with the Business Committee, admitting that Howard did not meet the Seneca-Cayuga Nation's Constitutional requirements for membership, as mandated by the Election Ordinance. The Business Committee refused to allow a person unqualified for tribal membership to run for Chief and denied Howard's request to appear on the ballot in the upcoming election.



Magistrate Tom Walker affirmed the Business Committee's finding as to Howard's inability to meet the constitutional requirements for membership by writing "as a matter of law" that "plaintiff [Howard] does not meet the requirements for membership in the Nation as set out in the Nation's Election Ordinance." Magistrate Walker nevertheless used his judicial authority and allowed Howard to run for Chief, setting up the possibility that a person judicially determined to be unqualified for tribal membership could be elected Chief of that tribe. The Business Committee is considering an appeal to insure that only those who meet the Seneca-Cayuga Nation's Constitution membership requirements run for office. Since the Court's finding of lack of qualification for tribal membership is legally binding on Howard, it is unclear if and when the formality of disenrollment will begin.