

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS



FORMER FEDERAL OFFICIAL TO HELP VALLEY CITIZEN GROUPS

February 24, 2006 12:00 AM

A former U.S. Solicitor General will help two Santa Ynez Valley citizen groups challenge in federal court a proposed land annexation by the Chumash Indians.

Theodore B. Olson, a partner in the firm of Gibson, Dunn and Crutcher LLP, will carry the case for Preservation of Los Olivos (POLO) and Preservation of Santa Ynez (POSY). The groups, along with Santa Ynez Valley Concerned Citizens and Women's Environmental Watch of the Santa Ynez Valley, are seeking a judicial review of a recent Department of Interior Board of Indian Appeals decision. The board determined in early February that the groups did not have legal standing to object to a BIA approval of a 6.9-acre land annexation by the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians. The tribe hopes to build a museum, cultural center and office complex on the property just across Highway 246 from its current casino and resort complex.

Mr. Olson was the 42nd solicitor general of the U.S. and has served as private counsel for former President George W. Bush and the late President Ronald Reagan. He was assistant attorney general for the Office of Legal Counsel during the Reagan administration.

He has argued 42 cases before the Supreme Court of the United States, including cases on property rights, the environment, separation of powers and the First Amendment.

"We are looking forward to our day in court and are very pleased and encouraged to have the representation of former U.S. Solicitor General Theodore B. Olson of international law firm Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher," POLO representatives said in a statement last week. "While there is legal action pending, we cannot comment on any specifics of this case at this time."