



SOUTHERN UTE INDIAN TRIBE

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Southern Ute Indian Tribe Calls on Colorado Attorney General to Address Unlawful Use of Tribal Lands By Lumen

Southern Ute Indian Reservation — On Friday, January 16, 2026, Chairman Melvin J. Baker presented his annual State of the Tribes address to the Colorado General Assembly. In his remarks, he called on the Colorado Attorney General to work with the Southern Ute Indian Tribe (Tribe) to investigate and address Lumen Technologies, Inc.'s unlawful trespass on Tribal lands. After an extensive investigation, the Tribe determined that Lumen Technologies, which was formerly known as CenturyLink, had covertly installed over 100 miles of telecommunications infrastructure on the Southern Ute Indian Reservation *without* required approvals.

Following a comprehensive review of Lumen's telecommunications infrastructure on the Reservation, the Tribe documented more than 170 miles of Lumen's telecommunications lines on Tribal lands, including nearly 100 miles installed illegally by Lumen, and its predecessor companies. Many of these facilities were constructed without obtaining required Tribal or Federal authorization or were maintained by Lumen after approved rights-of-way had expired. Lumen often accesses the Tribe's land through state rights-of-way and uses Tribal lands as a corridor to access other areas of the State.

Lumen's unlawful use of Tribal lands is ongoing. Even after more than a year of engagement by Tribal staff to resolve these issues cooperatively, Lumen continues to conduct unsanctioned work. Although the Tribe has repeatedly informed Lumen that it is not authorized to enter Tribal lands, contractors working for Lumen were observed as recently as last week installing fiber infrastructure on Tribal property without a lawful right-of-way. In performing their work, Lumen struck a waterline, disrupting water service to Tribal government offices. Lumen's management has not responded to the incident.

The Tribe has a demonstrated history of working cooperatively with business partners to ensure lawful access to Tribal lands. In this case, however, Lumen has failed to sufficiently engage with the Tribe on finding an appropriate resolution. When the Tribe requested a meeting with Lumen's CEO, Kate Johnson, to address the company's ongoing trespass, the request was declined.

Lumen's conduct reflects a continued disrespect for Tribal sovereignty, one experienced by other Tribes. Most recently the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon reported that Lumen was, likewise, trespassing on their land. Lumen's ongoing unlawful use of Tribal lands brings to mind a dark period in this Nation's history when Tribal land accessed illegally and used for personal economic benefit - *a practice that has no place in today's world.*

In Chairman Baker's January 16th address, he raised these concerns directly with the Colorado General Assembly and called on the Colorado Attorney General to work with the Tribe to investigate Lumen's activities statewide. Chairman Baker told the legislature that "the age of illegally using Tribal land should have ended long ago. But Lumen does not understand that."

Meanwhile, as the Tribe considers its legal options, all contractors and other representatives of Lumen are being put on notice that if they cross Tribal lands without a valid right-of-way, the Southern Ute Department of Justice & Regulatory will escort them off the Reservation and legal proceedings against those individuals for trespass will be initiated.

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