

Ann Dodd-Collins
Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy
LD 1626

FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON MAINE PUBLIC POLICY
Committee on Tribal-State Relations
129 Chesterville Hill Road
Chesterville, ME 04938

To: Senator Carney, Representative Harnett, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee
on
Judiciary

From: Ann Dodd-Collins, 120 Pleasant Ave #3, Portland ME 04103
Member, Friends (Quaker) Committee on Maine Public Policy

RE: LD 906, An Act To Provide Passamaquoddy Tribal Members Access to Clean
Drinking Water

I am Ann Dodd-Collins, of Portland. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of LD 906 on behalf of the Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy (FCMPP). FCMPP is a statewide network of Quakers who are focused on public policy issues in Maine, with a principal concern to strengthen tribal-state relations. Additionally, The Maine Council of Churches concurs with FCMPP in supporting LD 906. The Council has seven member denominations and two associate member churches representing 438 congregations with more than 55,000 parishioners across the state.

Clean drinking water is a basic human right, one that the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik (Peasant Point) has not had for more than 40 years.

This bill, sponsored by Passamaquoddy Representative Rena Newell, is designed to help resolve the longstanding water quality issues at Sipayik. The Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik has been facing a decades-long water crisis, including boil water notices and unsafe levels of trihalomethanes in the tap water, toxic chemicals which are known to cause health issues such as cancer and liver and kidney problems. Community members are forced to rely on bottled water or drive ten miles away to a church in Robbinston to fill containers for drinking, cooking, and household use.

* Although the Tribe has a well on land that it owns in the Town of Perry, the Town of Perry has prohibited the tribe from using the well. It can do this because of provisions in the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Acts.

* Working with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Tribe could build capacity for and regulate its own drinking water under the federal Safe Drinking Water Act, but the Settlement Acts prohibit the tribe from working with the EPA.

*The Passamaquoddy Water District (PDW), which serves Sipayik and the town of Eastport, is the only water district in the state of Maine which pays property taxes. Exempting the PWD from paying taxes would better equip it to cover operating costs, including system upgrades. This bill would specifically address these problems in existing law. The Tribe is working to build a better world for tribal members and Mainers as a whole. The unsafe drinking water issue clearly demonstrates the limitations to tribal sovereignty regarding a basic human need – water.

The Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy, together with the Maine Council of Churches, supports LD 906 and asks your Committee to unanimously vote “ought to pass.”

Thank you.