

June & Roy Smoot
Kennebunk
LD 2004

Sen. Anne Carney
Rep. Matt Moonen
Maine State Legislature Judiciary Committee

Re: LD 2004, An Act to Enact the Advancing Equality for Wabanaki Nations Act

Wabanaki tribes in Maine are treated differently than all other 570 federally recognized tribes across our country. Because of the 1980 Settlement Act, when Congress passes federal legislation for tribes nationwide, tribes in Maine must be explicitly written into the legislation unlike all other other federally recognized tribes.

This is an excessive burden to Wabanaki tribes and unfair in every sense. They do not have the resources to track all federal legislation and lobby Congress to have them included in each piece of legislation.

Think of this burden if your town had to be written into every piece of legislation passed at the Maine legislature where you currently serve to do what is best for all Mainers, including your town.

We live in Kennebunk and our State Senator is Joseph Rafferty and State Representative is Daniel Sayre. If Kennebunk had to be specifically added to each piece of state legislation passed, it would be impossible for our state legislators to include our town. With nearly 3,000 pieces of legislation being considered just this legislative session, our legislators would never be able to include Kennebunk in each one. They'd be running around frantically to each committee or try putting an amendment on each bill before it reaches the floor. THAT is what we're asking Wabanaki tribes in Maine to do at Congress ... in Washington D.C.

In 2019, approximately 151 federal beneficial Indian laws passed by Congress were found by Suffolk University since the Settlement Act was implemented in 1980. Tribes in Maine do not have access to the benefits of these laws, while all other 570 federally recognized tribes in America do. Many of these laws were passed such that Wabanaki tribes do not have access to them. They would not only benefit them, but also non-native Mainers in surrounding rural areas. With the tribes not being able to access various federal funding, their self-determination and economic vitality have been stunted dramatically. Allowing access to federal beneficial laws will not only benefit Wabanaki tribes, but also citizens in rural Maine.

Taking each piece of legislation passed on a case by case basis would take decades. For example, in 2013 the Violence Against Woman's Act was finally amended to include Native American women. However, the tribes in Maine were not included. Maine finally passed legislation mirroring the federal law to include Wabanaki tribes and women in Maine in 2020. Incomprehensible at best. Why did it take seven years for Wabanaki tribes in Maine to protect their tribal members from domestic violence?

This legislation doesn't circumvent Maine's 1980's Settlement Act. It changes a provision in the Settlement Act that would at least begin the process of placing Wabanaki tribes in Maine on the same footing as the other 570 federally recognized tribes. Please support LD 2004 to start putting Wabanaki tribes and their non-Native neighbors in rural Maine on a path to prosperity, better health and better education.

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