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LD 2004

Today I am writing in support of LD 2004, it is time that the Tribes of Maine have the same access to federal beneficial Indian laws passed by Congress that the other 570 federally recognized Tribes have. Suffolk University published a report in 2019 that found 151 federal laws that have been passed that the Tribes of Maine did not have access to.

The Wabanaki Tribes of Maine have been treated differently than the other 570 recognized Tribes across the country. The 1980 Settlement Act has produced an unusual relationship with the State of Maine that does not allow the Tribes to benefit from these laws that would help the Tribes in regard to economic development and needed infrastructure issues that are sorely needed.

This bill would enable the Tribes of Maine to take part in federally passed laws that would not only benefit them but also rural Maine. It has been argued that each piece of legislation should be passed on a case-by-case example. This would take decades and also prohibit the Tribes to benefit from much needed legislation such as the Violence Against Women Act (2013) that the Maine Tribes had to wait seven years in Maine to be passed (2020).

This legislation changes a provision in the Settlement Act that would begin the process of putting the Tribes of Maine on the same footing as the 570 federally recognized Tribes. It has been agreed that the 1980 Settlement Act was intended by all parties to be fluid.

Personally, I will state that I have family at Indian Township. I have seen firsthand the hardships that this limiting relationship has had vis-a-vis the state of Maine and Wabanaki Tribes. It is cruel and inhumane to disallow beneficial laws to not be enjoyed with subsequent growth potential for the Tribes of Maine and for my family. I support LD. 2004 so that we can right this provision and experience the growth potential inherent for all the Tribes of Maine as well as for rural Maine.