

Shemaya Laurel
Gouldsboro
LD 2004

Dear members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Shemaya Laurel and I live in Gouldsboro. I am writing in support of LD 2004, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations

It concerns me deeply that the tribes in Maine are not treated the same as all the other federally recognized tribes across the United States, when it comes to federal legislation that specifically addresses issues related to Tribal Nations across the country. Why should Tribal Nations in Maine be excluded? This is unfair, and must be corrected.

Fixing this situation is important because tribal members in Maine have been at such a disadvantage, as compared to other tribes across the country, and as compared to nontribal residents in Maine. These disadvantages are reflected economically, and through access to basic healthcare and education.

I understand that some folks believe that each federal law can be addressed individually, to apply to tribes in Maine. This is unrealistic, based on the large number of pieces of legislation, and based on the evidence of its track record. For example, when the Violence Against Women Act was finally passed to apply to tribal members across the country, it took SEVEN YEARS before it actually applied to tribal members in Maine. This is egregious. How many Indigenous women bore the brunt of that lack of access to addressing domestic violence, over the course of those seven years. Based on domestic violence rates, and the appalling rates of murder and disappearance of Indigenous women, the cost of the time lag in that legislation was beyond heartbreaking, for individuals, their loved ones, their families.

Passing LD 2004 would begin to address this unequal and unfair situation. Please fully support passing LD 2004, so that all federal legislation applies fairly to the tribes in Maine, together with federally recognized tribes across the country.

Sincerely,
Shemaya Laurel