

VOTE YES on LD 2007.

When my friends outside of the state ask me why Maine has not eased the restrictions of the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act, I cannot answer. After the Harvard report was published, it became impossible to defend the delay. The Wabanaki Nations are educationally and economically behind the 570 other tribes across the US. Even with the support of thousands of Mainers who testified in favor of the sovereignty bill, the 250+ organizations who have joined the Wabanaki Alliance, the Wabanaki Nation has been excluded from the benefits others federal tribes are reaping. Why has Maine failed to honor and support the People of the Dawnland when we can see a clear path forward?

I read the Harvard Report. The Settlement Acts limit self-governance for the Wabanaki. That and other exclusions concerning safe water, housing, healthcare, and managing natural disasters put the tribes at a severe disadvantage. These exclusions hurt all of us in Maine. Self-government would add to the state's GDP, provide thousands of jobs, not to mention tax revenue and better quality of life for ALL Mainers.

The children in Wabanaki communities suffer the most from the economic restrictions our state has maintained against the FIRST people of this land. The child poverty rate amongst these communities is staggering. It's time to do what's right for this next generation and begin healing historical trauma. Why would anyone in our state feel comfortable knowing opportunities are being denied to a select group of CHILDREN?

If the concern is litigation and discord as all parties sail uncharted waters, I say that's short sighted. According to the Harvard Report, the overall experience outside of Maine has been that "increasingly capable tribal governments improve state-tribal relations by enabling both parties to cooperate productively." Better opportunity, fair treatment, and a secure future for all Wabanaki tribes, especially the littlest ancestors of Dawnland, is a moral imperative.

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Respectfully,

Melissa Dearborn