

Testimony in Support of LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self- , Determination for Wabanaki Nations, Sponsored by Speaker Ross

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Stephen Ward and I am a retired state employee living in Newcastle. I am an officer of the Episcopal Committee on Indian Relations and am requesting an "Ought to Pass" vote on LD 2007.

I urge a favorable vote in order to rectify a lingering set of negative consequences from the 1980 Indian Claims Settlement Act. These include:

- 1) Unlike 570 other federally recognized tribes, the Wabanaki Nations are dealt with by the State of Maine in a subordinated status with no recognition of full sovereignty.
- 2) Provisions in the 1980 implementing acts make the Wabanaki Nation ineligible for newly-enacted federal benefits and programs unless specifically authorized by the State of Maine.
- 3) Taken together, these facts have led to a drastic reduction in economic development for the Wabanaki Nations compared with other federally-recognized tribes since 1980, with spill-over effects on neighboring municipalities whose growth is similarly retarded.

I regard enactment of LD 2007 as a moral imperative for charting a positive and mutually respectful path forward. Laws inevitably change over time as circumstances evolve. It is time to reconsider the sovereignty provisions of the Indian Claims Settlement Act as they affect the State's dealings with the Wabanaki Nations.

I urge a unanimous "Ought to Pass" vote on LD 2007.

Stephen Ward  
Newcastle  
LD 2007

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