

aubrey Bell  
Norway  
LD 2007

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

My name is Aubrey Bell. I am a resident of Norway and am testifying in support of LD 2007.

As a member of the First Universalist Church of Norway, and of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network (MUUSAN), and a member of the Shawnee Nation, issues concerning the sovereignty of the original inhabitants of Maine are important to me.

My beliefs affirm and promote justice, equity and compassion in human relations, and the inherent worth and dignity of every person. As an Indigenous citizen, I know the heartbreak of living under treaties that have been violated time and again and the abysmal conditions many of the Wabanaki communities live under. I also know how empowering it can be for a state when they treat their original inhabitants with the dignity and equality they deserve.

I believe LD 2007 should become law because the 1980 Settlement Implementing Act, which it would amend, has put the Wabanaki tribes in a category separate from all other federally recognized tribes in the U.S. and has stifled the Tribes' right to self-determination, causing both cultural and economic hardship.

As the rest of the Indigenous nations in the United States have seen 30 years of economic boom, the Wabanaki are left behind. In Indian Country, all eyes are now on the deplorable conditions that Maine enforces on its Indigenous citizens. The restrictions of the Settlement Act prevent the Wabanaki Nations from taking full advantage of federal self-determination policies that are very clearly benefiting 570 other tribes and nearby communities across the country. The average income growth since 1989 has been 61 percent for tribal citizens not located in Maine, but only 9 percent for Wabanaki citizens in Maine; Maine's overall income growth for the same period was 25 percent. Likewise, because of the Settlement Act, the Wabanaki tribes' health, educational and economic outcomes have lagged far behind those of other population groups in Maine and other tribes throughout the country.

What is good for the Wabanaki citizens is good for the whole of Maine. It is imperative that the State of Maine restore the Wabanaki Peoples' sovereignty and right to self-determination, for the Wabanaki and all Mainers. I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 2007.

Thank you,  
Aubrey Bell