

Ezra Smith
Topsham
LD 2007

Dear Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Ezra Smith, and I'm a resident of Topsham. I'm writing today to testify in support of LD 2007.

I have lived in Maine for 8 years, and in that time I have come to know some members of the Micmac nation well. I have seen some of the effects of their loss of sovereignty, and becoming wards of the state. I teach at a school in Freeport, and I am close with a Micmac student, whose family has worked for generations to establish the dignity of a tribal nation that still lives and breaths here today. So much of the public's perception around Native Americans is that their governments and organizational structure is relegated to the history books, that they are essentially refugees in need of care and to be helped to be brought up to speed in the modern world. Over the past few years I have come to reject this notion of helplessness, and to see that even though unspeakable harm has been done to this population that they are still here and committed to their people and their culture.

It seems to me that this bill is a way to give back some of that freedom to self determine what these nations had for hundreds of years before they were forced to submit to at first British and then American rule. I believe that Maine made a mistake in the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act, and that this current bill can help give the recognition that tribes all over the country receive.

I urge you to support LD 2007 as well, thank you.