

Diane Morrison  
Nobleboro  
LD 2007

Testimony in support of LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations

To: Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary From: Diane Morrison, 63 Checkerberry Road Nobleboro, ME 04555

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Diane Morrison and I live in Nobleboro. I am writing to testify in support of LD 2007.

My french-speaking family immigrated to Maine from Canada in the late 1800s. Several generations ago, a MicMac woman married into our family becoming my great-great grandmother. We've contributed to the economic, cultural, and social development of Maine for generations. This is a common experience for many families. When my husband and I returned to Nobleboro after living in several different parts of our county, I was disappointed and ashamed to learn compared to all other states that Maine did not afford the same rights to its indigenous tribes. Why does the state of Maine want to prevent the Wabanaki Nations from exercising their inherent right to self govern, as all other federally recognized tribes in the United States are able to do under Federal Indian Law? There is no legitimate answer to this question.

The Wabanaki Alliance has researched and presented key points in support of LD 2007. With due respect, I've excerpted 3 main points below for your consideration.

Passing LD 2007 is all about fairness and equity.

Due to restrictions imposed by the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA), the Wabanaki Nations have been kept from achieving the significant economic growth experienced by the other 570 federal tribes over the past 40 years who've had full access to federal policies of self-determination. Removing those obstacles would help the Wabanaki Nations take advantage of federal self-determination policies, programs and funding that elsewhere in Indian Country led to the creation of thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in goods and services produced by Native businesses.

Maine is falling behind: Outside of Maine, there's a 30-year economic boom going on in Indian Country.

Easing the Settlement Act's restrictions will enable the Wabanaki Nations to take 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% for tribal citizens not located in Maine, but only 9% for Wabanaki citizens in Maine; Maine's overall income growth for the same period was 25%. 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.

When the Wabanaki thrive, rural Maine thrives.

By modernizing MICSA, Harvard researchers say the Wabanaki Nations could become the economic engines of their regions, creating new opportunities for jobs and income growth for themselves and rural Maine. According to the recent Harvard Report, self-government for the tribes would likely mean an additional \$330 million a year in Maine's Gross Domestic Product, more than 2,700 jobs, and \$39 million a year in state and local tax revenue.

Thank you for your consideration and support of LD 2007.