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LD 2007

I strongly support LD 2007, "An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations". Because of the legacy of Maine's 1980 Indian Land Claims Settlement Act, Maine's Wabanaki people have been unfairly and needlessly excluded from Federal self-determination policies and programs which substantially benefit 570 native tribes elsewhere in this country and which should be benefiting Maine's Wabanaki people. This is resulting in widespread and unnecessary poverty, especially for Wabanaki children, and in unnecessary costs to our state through litigation. It is deeply unfair and unnecessary that Maine's Wabanaki people have been excluded from the economic and cultural opportunities available to other native tribes in the United States, and it is high time to right the wrongs which resulted from the 1980 Settlement Act, which was never meant to be set in stone, but rather to be revisited. The Act is clearly not working and has been the source of much costly litigation, ill will and uncertainty. Indeed, its only "achievement" seems to be the unnecessary impoverishment and isolation of Maine's Wabanaki people, effectively cutting them off from federal programs which could help them and our state prosper. It is well past time that Maine's legislature takes decisive action to put this unacceptable situation right and to restore the rights of Maine's Wabanaki peoples - rights which are freely available to 570 tribes across the country, and which benefit those tribes and their nearby communities. LD 2007 will benefit all of Maine's people as well as Maine's Wabanaki peoples and it ought to pass.