

Tenley Skolfield
Solon
LD 958

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for LD 958, An Act to Prohibit Eminent Domain on Tribal Lands, sponsored by Representative Billy Bob Faulkingham.

This bill is a crucial step towards recognizing and respecting the sovereignty of the Wabanaki Nations. By amending the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act and the 2023 Mi'kmaq Nation Restoration Act, LD 958 would prevent the state from exercising eminent domain over lands within Passamaquoddy Tribe territory, Penobscot Nation territory, Houlton Band Trust Land, and Mi'kmaq Nation Trust Land.

The right of eminent domain has historically been used to infringe upon tribal sovereignty and diminish tribal landholdings. By removing this power from the state, LD 958 aligns with the fundamental principle that the Wabanaki Nations are sovereign governments with inherent authority to regulate their territories.

This legislation is not only a matter of justice but also aligns with evolving federal policy. While the original intent of laws like the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementation Act may have been to eliminate tribal landholdings, Congress has since changed course. It is time for Maine to follow suit and update its laws to reflect a more respectful and equitable relationship with tribal nations.

Protecting tribal lands from state eminent domain power is essential for:

- Preserving cultural heritage
- Ensuring economic self-determination
- Maintaining environmental stewardship
- Upholding treaty obligations

While some may argue that limiting eminent domain could lead to holdout problems, the protection of tribal sovereignty should take precedence. The Wabanaki Nations have been stewards of this land for millennia, and their right to govern their territories should be respected.

I urge you to vote in favor of LD 958. This bill represents an important step towards acknowledging the inherent rights of the Wabanaki Nations and fostering a more just relationship between the state of Maine and its indigenous peoples.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
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