

Christina Rusnov

LD 395

am writing in SUPPORT of LD 395, An Act To Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations.

The Wabanaki are the original people in this territory. They have experienced racism that has separated families, abused children, denied them economic parity, denigrated their culture and so much more. The Wabanaki want these changes, want their sovereignty, want to govern themselves. We immigrants to Maine should honor their decision.

Note that this bill excludes federal tribal gaming laws, stipulating that the Wabanaki Nations would be subject to state gaming laws. It also extends to the Mi'kmaq Nation — which did not participate in the original Settlement Acts — the same rights and provisions granted to Penobscot Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribe, and the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians.

^{SEP}As I'm sure you are aware, this bipartisan bill amends the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act and the Aroostook Band of Micmacs Settlement Act so that the Wabanaki tribes can benefit from most existing and future federal laws that apply to the more than 570 other federally recognized tribes. Under the Settlement Acts, when Congress passes federal legislation, Wabanaki tribes in Maine must be explicitly written into the legislation. The Wabanaki Nations are the only federally recognized tribes to be treated in this way.

LD 395 would modernize the Settlement Acts, ensuring that the tribes in Maine are not excluded when Congress passes federal legislation for tribes nationwide as they have been at least 151 times in the past 40 years.

It only makes sense that this would benefit not only the Wabanaki Nations, but also surrounding rural communities.

Please do the right thing and vote in favor of LD395.

Thank you.