

Meret Bainbridge
Saco
LD 785

Meret Bainbridge, Saco, Maine

Valued members of the committee on Judiciary,

I support passage of LD 785, An Act to Enact the Remaining Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act

The four tribes that comprise the Wabanaki Nations - Penobscot Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribe, Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians and Mi'kmaq Nation - have been denied recognition of their inherent sovereignty by the State of Maine since the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act.

They have been treated by the State like municipalities rather than the sovereign nations they are, resulting in 45 years of uncertainty, litigation, delays and missed economic opportunities because of MICSAs exclusionary language. The politicians who drafted this document considered it a "living document" that was designed to evolve. But the State of Maine has interpreted this as a trade-in of sovereignty for settlement money, and denied any evolution of the acts by stating that "a deal is a deal". MICSAs / MIAs has failed the tribes.

A bipartisan Task Force formed by the Maine Legislature in 2019 issued a report in 2020 with 22 recommendations to amend the settlement acts. While some of these recommendations have been implemented in a "piecemeal" approach, large portions are remaining to be amended.

Please note that the legislative bill in front of you deliberately exempts gaming provisions which would remain under Maine State Law.

It's past due to get this legislation over the finish line and restore tribal sovereignty.

I urge you to vote OTP on LD 785.