

Rhianna Brandt
Newburgh
LD 785

As a non-Native resident of Penobscot County, I write in support of LD 785 for two reasons: justice and self-interest.

As a matter of justice: if the United States and the state of Maine wish to be moral political bodies, communities of rights and ethics, then it is incumbent upon our federal and state governments to redress their historic wrongs. Passage of LD 785 would be a step toward that redress.

As a matter of self-interest, I believe that empowering Native communities benefits all communities. The political, economic, and environmental practices of many Native nations have made enormous contributions to much of what is strongest in those same practices in the political body of the United States. Empowering Native nations enriches the capacities of every community around them. As it stands, both the Wabanaki Nations and all their neighbors in the state of Maine lag behind the Native nations and neighbors of every other federally recognized tribe in the United States in realizing the political, economic, and environmental benefits of empowered Native communities. This is an error that is long overdue for correction in the state of Maine.

In the very limited areas where empowering Native nations curtails any rights and privileges of non-Native communities, I do not see this as a bad thing. All sets of rights and privileges must have healthy limits that are in accordance with the stated values of the political community. Once again, if the United States and the state of Maine as political bodies wish to be communities that uphold ethical values, it is incumbent upon them to consider appropriate limitations on their rights and privileges.

Especially in this era of extreme political division, dysfunction, and paralysis, any issue that can muster support from across the political spectrum deserves special attention. Please, please let us work together on the positive issues upon which we can agree, and let us hope that, in turn, that shared achievement can begin to knit the tears in our political and communal bonds.