

Mark Follansbee  
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LD 785

Honorable committee,

I submit the following comments for your consideration of LD 785.

I am asking you to support LD 785 to allow for a level playing field for the Wabanaki Nations. Mainers overwhelmingly support Wabanaki self-determination. More than 1,600 Mainers testified in record numbers supporting tribal sovereignty legislation based on the consensus recommendations of a bipartisan legislative task force. Environmental organizations, social justice organizations, organized labor, and faith-based groups continue to voice strong support on behalf of tens of thousands of their members. In addition, more than 250 businesses and organizations have joined the Wabanaki Alliance Tribal Coalition — including the newly formed “Businesses for Wabanaki Sovereignty”.

For more than forty years, restrictions in the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA) have blocked the Wabanaki Nations from accessing all of the federal self-determination policies that helped 570 other tribes create thousands of jobs and generate hundreds of millions in economic activity. While tribal income outside of Maine grew 61% since 1989, Wabanaki income grew only 9% (compared to Maine’s 25% overall). Modernizing the Settlement Act is an economic win-win. Harvard researchers project that tribal self-government would add \$330 million annually to Maine’s GDP, create 2,700+ jobs (more than half filled by non-tribal rural Mainers), and generate \$39 million yearly in state and local tax revenue. It’s time to remove these barriers and allow the people and businesses of the Wabanaki Nations to thrive along with other Mainers.

It’s time to remove the barriers that have kept the Wabanaki and their rural Maine neighbors from the economic resurgence achieved by tribes across Indian Country. When the Wabanaki thrive, rural Maine thrives. Please support LD 785.