

Jason Grundstrom-Whitney
Monmouth
LD 785

Dear Friends,

I write today in support of LD 785- An Act to Enact the Remaining Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act

This Bill is overwhelmingly supported by Maine people with over 1,600 Maine people testifying in support of recommendations by a bipartisan legislative task force. This Bill would level the playing field due to the restrictions of the 1980 Indian Claims Settlement Act which blocks the Wabanaki Nations from accessing all the Federal self-determination policies that have helped all the other of the 570 federally recognized tribes across the U.S.

It has been estimated by the Harvard study that supporting this Bill would bring 330 million dollars to Maine's GDP, create 2,700 jobs and generate 39 million in State and Local taxes. This is clearly an advantage for the Wabanaki Nations and the State of Maine.

As a result of not having a level playing field, poverty for Wabanaki children is between 40-77% compared to Maine's overall childhood poverty rate of 15%. We can all agree that our children are our future. To have stable food security, housing and the amenities important for the development and nourishment of a child is paramount. Yet why is it that we have as a State restricted children for decades from funds that would help their development among the Wabanaki Nations? These statistics are sobering and unconscionable given that we know about the deleterious effects on children living in poverty, yet we willingly as a State deny beneficial Federal Bills enjoyed by the other 570 Tribes of the U.S.

This writer feels that what the State of Maine has been doing in restricting these Federal Bills is tantamount to Human Rights Violations and cannot be tolerated by civil society.

I focus today on the children, yet there are so many other beneficial bills that will help with infrastructure needs and much more. The focus is deliberate and pointed. Are we to stand by and watch children of the Wabanaki Nations suffer crippling poverty or will we finally agree that this can no longer be tolerated and support the passage of this Bill.

Let us pass LD 785