



WINYAH RIVERS
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Marine & Wetland Studies
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Friday, August 18, 2017

Michael S. Black
Acting Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs
MS-3642-MIB
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC. 20240

Dear Mr. Black,

Re: Support for Federal Recognition of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina

I am writing to express my support for recently introduced legislation from Senator Richard Burr and Congressman Robert Pittenger that would grant the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina full federal recognition.

I believe, as do Senator Burr and Congressman Pittenger, that the Lumbee Tribe deserves the same recognition and benefits as other federally recognized tribes. The Lumbee have continuously existed in and around Robeson County since the early 18th century. Recognized in 1885 by the State of North Carolina, the Lumbee Tribe has sought full federal recognition since 1888. Congress passed the Lumbee Act in 1956 but the Act withheld the full benefits of federal recognition.

Senator Burr and Congressman Pittenger have recently renewed the effort to establish full federal recognition for the Lumbee Tribe. According to them, the Lumbee Tribe has been denied millions of dollars in benefits given to fully recognized tribes as a result of its ineligibility for economic development programs through the Bureau of Indian Affairs. They note that this was particularly unfair following Hurricane Matthew in October 2016 which had a devastating impact on Robeson County. Because it does not have full federal recognition, the Lumbee Tribe was not able to receive disaster relief generally afforded to federally recognized tribes.

The Lumbee Tribe provides programs and services to all tribal members within the tribal service areas of Cumberland, Hoke, Robeson and Scotland Counties. According to recent census data, American Indian and Alaska Natives represent 41% of the population in Robeson County, far exceeding the State's 1.6% (%s in Scotland – 11.8, Hoke – 9.2, and Cumberland – 1.8 are lower than Robeson but also above the State %). In all of these counties except Hoke, %s increased from the 2010 census. Notably Robeson and Scotland are identified as Tier 1 counties (most distressed in terms of economic well-being) and are counties with the lowest health ranking score, within the Rural 1st Quartile (lowest) as identified by the NC Rural Center. In fact, Robeson County is ranked 100 out of 100 in terms of health outcomes and Scotland County is ranked 99 out of 100.

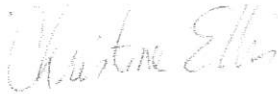
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Winyah Rivers is an advocate for clean water and healthy communities in the Lumber River Basin. Because of our work on behalf of all communities, including the Lumbee, I am particularly concerned about environmental injustices. Both Robeson and Scotland Counties are particularly susceptible given their poor health outcomes and economic status. Affording the Lumbee Tribe full federal recognition will help to improve and keep its communities healthy and flourishing.

It is time to correct this unfairness, grant the Lumbee Tribe full federal recognition and begin providing equal opportunities to encourage economic growth and well-being within the Lumbee Tribe. I hope you agree and ask that you support this effort.

Sincerely,



Christine Ellis
Deputy Director & River Advocate
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cc to:

Ryan Zinke, U.S. Secretary of the Interior, Department of the Interior (1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20240)

Weldon Loudermilk, Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs (MS-4606, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20240)

Bruce Maytubby, Regional Director, Eastern Regional Office, Bureau of Indian Affairs (545 Marriott Drive, Suite 700, Nashville, TN 37214)

Harvey Godwin, Jr., Tribal Chairman, Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina (PO Box 2709, Pembroke, NC 28372)

Senator Richard Burr (217 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510)

Congressman Robert Pittenger (224 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515)

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