

Congressman David Price
Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States
Statement: HR 1964, the Lumbee Recognition Act
December 4, 2019

I want to extend my gratitude to **Chairman Gallego** and **Ranking Member Cook** of the Subcommittee and **Chairman Grijalva** and **Ranking Member Bishop** of the full Committee for holding this hearing on Federal Recognition for the Lumbee Tribe.

I also want to thank my friend and colleague from North Carolina, **Congressman Butterfield**, for introducing this crucial legislation.

Finally, I also want to thank **Chairman Godwin** of the Lumbee Tribe for inviting me to speak today and for all his efforts to advance this cause.

While the Lumbee Tribe was first recognized by North Carolina in state law in 1887 and again in 1953, they have sought similar recognition as a tribe by the federal government since 1888. Although Congress recognized the Lumbee Tribe in 1956, when it did so it prevented the Tribe from receiving federal benefits.

This legislation would correct that oversight providing the Lumbee Tribe with all the same recognition, benefits, and resources as other federally recognized tribes, helping to correct decades of injustice.

For those who are not familiar, the Lumbee are the largest Native American tribe east of the Mississippi River. Almost 50,000 Lumbee Indians live in North Carolina, and Lumbee Indians contribute to every aspect of society in North Carolina and in the US.

In Robeson County, North Carolina, where many members of the Lumbee Tribe reside, nearly a third of people live in poverty. This is why

it is of the utmost importance that we ensure the Lumbee Tribe has access to the full range of federal resources, including economic development programs.

Additionally, just as many North Carolina communities are still reeling from the impacts of recent hurricanes, so too are members of the Lumbee Tribe. Federal recognition will rightfully allow the Lumbee access to disaster relief funds to ensure they can bounce back from extreme weather events.

This bill will also take lands in Robeson County into trust, allowing the Lumbee Tribe to create more opportunities for economic development. This will help the Tribe reach its goal of becoming financially stable and independent.

This legislation is long overdue and ensures that the federal government adheres to the spirit of its treaty obligations with Native American Communities.

Thank you again to the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the committee and subcommittee, to Congressman Butterfield, and to Chairman Godwin. The Lumbee Tribe deserves recognition, and I hope that my colleagues will support this legislation.