

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
naomi.miguel@mail.house.gov

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
ken.degenfelder@mail.house.gov

RE: Support for H.R. 6707--*Advancing Equality for Wabanaki Nations Act*

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman,

On behalf of the American Friends Service Committee Wabanaki Program Committee we write this letter today in support of **H.R. 6707 Advancing Equality for Wabanaki Nations Act** currently under consideration before the Committee on Natural Resources. We are Maine Quakers, community members, and Wabanaki people who serve together on the Program Committee of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) Wabanaki Program based in Washington County Maine. The AFSC is a major Quaker agency with both national and international programs dealing with peace, justice, humanitarian aid and community empowerment. The AFSC Wabanaki Program has worked with Maine tribal communities for over 45 years, collaboratively addressing needs and injustices within the Wabanaki communities and between the Wabanaki people and the State of Maine.

As you may know, the outcome of Rep. Jared Golden's proposed H.R.6707 would be to remedy the damaging effect of the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act. While this 1980 legislation helped to resolve land claim controversies in Maine, a provision added before it passed Congress also severed the longstanding Trustee relationship between the tribes in Maine and the U.S. Government. As a result, no subsequent act of Congress has had any application to the tribes in Maine unless they were named specifically in the act.

Roughly 150 bills passed by the Congress since 1980 have extended rights and benefits to the 570 other federally-recognized tribes in the other 49 states but denied these rights to the tribes in Maine. This crippling exclusion has cut off those tribes from Federal laws to improve public health, recover from natural disasters, deal with violence against women, and promote economic development for themselves and surrounding rural areas.

Passing H.R. 6707 will end this comprehensive denial of Federal benefits to the Wabanaki peoples in all future acts of Congress.

Quakers in the U.S. have a long legacy of interaction with and service to Native Americans back to Colonial times. We have not always acted wisely, but overall we have sought to be in relationship with Indigenous peoples in America with respect and justice. In full awareness of that tradition we now urge prompt passage of H.R. 6707.

Sincerely,
Richard Silliboy, Clerk. Richard.silliboy@myfairpoint.net

Katherine Carter, Committee member and facilitator. Kaycarter08@gmail.com

cc: Representative Jared Golden aaron.sege@mail.house.gov
Representative Chellie Pingree evan.johnston@mail.house.gov