

OS
Chair Teresa Leger Fernández
Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States
Remote Legislative Hearing on *H.R.4715, H.R.5715, and*
H.R.6707
March 31, 2021

Good afternoon and thank you to all our witnesses for joining us. Today, we will hear from Members of Congress and witnesses regarding three tribal bills.

The first bill we will hear today is H.R. 6707 – *The Advancing Equality for Wabanaki Nations Act*, introduced by our colleague, Representative of Maine, Jared Golden.

Currently, the Wabanaki Tribes are excluded from many laws that benefit other federally recognized tribes across the United States—creating an unfair system for tribes in Maine.

In 1980, the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act - also called MICSA - exchanged land between the United States and the Passamaquoddy Tribe, Penobscot Nation, and Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians. This exchange provided trust funds for the tribes to purchase land and provided general revenue and old-age pensions for their members.

Simultaneously, the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act blocked any federal laws from applying to Wabanaki

Tribes if it would affect the application of state law and extended civil and criminal jurisdiction to the state by ratifying the state-level Main Implementing Act.

Representative Golden’s *Advancing Equality for Wabanaki Nations Act* would not change the applicability of existing federal law. H.R. 6707 will update the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act to ensure that the Wabanaki Tribes benefit from any future legislation that benefits Indian Country.

H.R. 6707 represents years of negotiations between the Wabanaki tribes and the State of Maine. I also want to take this opportunity to welcome the Chiefs, who are here to testify on this bill.

Our second bill will be H.R. 5715 – To reauthorize the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Trust Fund, introduced by the Chair of the Full Committee, Mr. Raúl M. Grijalva of Arizona.

The Udall Foundation is a federal agency established in 1992 by Congress to honor Morris K. Udall and his legacy in supporting the environment, public lands, natural resources, and self-governance of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

The Udall Trust Fund provides scholarships, fellowships, and internships for students working within environmental

fields, American Indian and Alaska Native health care, and tribal public policy.

Additionally, the Foundation supports Native American and Alaska Native leaders through the Native Nations Institute for Leadership, Management, and Policy; promotes the Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy for research on environmental and Indigenous policy; increases opportunities for youth to experience our Nation's parks and wilderness through the Parks in Focus program. Lastly, the Foundation brings stakeholders together to collaboratively build a consensus through their conflict resolution services through the John S. McCain III National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution.

This legislation would reauthorize the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Trust Fund through 2029 and increase the funds allocated towards expenses to ensure they can continue to support meaningful work in their programs and services.

And finally, we will hear testimony on H.R. 4715 – The Quapaw Tribal Landowner Settlement Act of 2021, introduced by Representative Markwayne Mullin of Oklahoma.

H.R. 4715 will authorize appropriations to the U.S. Department of the Interior for payments to Quapaw tribal

members following the United States Court of Federal Claims recommendations.

The Tribe began pursuing litigation against the federal government in 2002 for the mismanagement of tribal resources and environmental damages to their tribal lands. After nearly two decades, the Tribe reached a settlement agreement with the federal government, made public in 2019 by the U.S. Court of Federal Claims.

This bill will finalize the settlement agreement terms by enacting the recommendations provided to the U.S. House of Representatives.

Thank you to our witnesses and bill sponsors for taking the time to testify before the Subcommittee. I look forward to hearing the testimony shared this afternoon. I would now like to recognize Vice Ranking Member Obernolte for his opening remarks.