



LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations Talking Points

Conversations with legislators, friends, family, and neighbors offer an important opportunity to share why LD 2007 is needed and how it will benefit the Wabanaki Nations and all of Maine. We've compiled a list of compelling reasons to support this legislation that you can use in discussions, letters to the editor, and emails to state officials and legislators. To view links to source material used in these talking points, visit our website at <https://www.wabanakialliance.com/ld-2007-talkingpoints>.

Passing LD 2007 is all about fairness and equity.

Due to restrictions imposed by the *1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA)*, the Wabanaki Nations have been kept from achieving the significant economic growth experienced by the other 570 federal tribes over the past 40 years who've had full access to federal policies of self-determination. Removing those obstacles would help the Wabanaki Nations take advantage of federal self-determination policies, programs and funding that elsewhere in Indian Country led to the creation of thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in goods and services produced by Native businesses.

Maine is falling behind: Outside of Maine, there's a 30-year economic boom going on in Indian Country.

Easing the Settlement Act's restrictions will enable the Wabanaki Nations to take full advantage of federal self-determination policies that are very clearly benefiting 570 other tribes and nearby communities across the country. The average income growth since 1989 has been 61% for tribal citizens not located in Maine, but only 9% for Wabanaki citizens in Maine; Maine's overall income growth for the same period was 25%. Likewise, because of the Settlement Act, the Wabanaki tribes' health, educational and economic outcomes have lagged far behind those of other population groups in Maine and other tribes throughout the country.

Economic restrictions have hit children the hardest.

According to the U.S. Census data in 2019, childhood poverty rates within Wabanaki communities range from a low of 40% at the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkomikuk community to a high of 77% for the Mi'kmaq Nation in Aroostook County. By comparison, Maine's childhood poverty rate for the same period is 15%.

When the Wabanaki thrive, rural Maine thrives.

By modernizing MICSA, Harvard researchers say the Wabanaki Nations could become the economic engines of their regions, creating new opportunities for jobs and income growth for themselves and rural Maine. According to the recent Harvard Report, self-government for the tribes would likely mean an additional \$330 million a year in Maine's Gross Domestic Product, more than 2,700 jobs, and \$39 million a year in state and local tax revenue. Based on the experience of other tribes, better than half the new jobs created are likely to be filled by neighbors of Wabanaki tribes in rural Maine.

The Settlement Act was never meant to be set in stone.

The politicians who drafted the 1980 Settlement Act called it a "living document" that should not be set in stone as it has been for more than 40 years to the detriment of the Wabanaki and rural Maine communities and the state of Maine. Bottom line: MICSA provides for the State of Maine, Passamaquoddy Tribe and Penobscot Nation to amend the law within broad areas. It's time to modernize this broken deal and begin a new era of partnership with the Wabanaki Nations for the betterment of everyone in Maine.

For the Wabanaki Nations, uncertainty, litigation, and delay are consequences of MICSA's exclusionary language since 1980.

Former Maine Attorney General Michael Carpenter, who voted for MICSA when he was a state senator representing Houlton, noted in a 2021 Bangor Daily News commentary that when he was reelected to the Maine Senate in 2016, it had become clear tribal relations with the state had deteriorated significantly, noting "Instead of working with the tribes, we were unnecessarily in the courts squandering taxpayer dollars."

Maine's wild and scenic beauty didn't happen by accident.

The Wabanaki have been protecting the environment and maintaining sustainable ecological practices for millennia, long before European settlement of Maine. They will continue to do so; it's their heritage and birthright as Wabanaki peoples.

Thousands of Mainers stand with the Wabanaki in support of their self-determination.

More than 1,600 Mainers from all corners of the state testified in record numbers in favor of passing a tribal sovereignty bill based on consensus recommendations made by a legislative task force four years ago. Environmental organizations, social justice organizations, organized labor, and faith-based groups continue to voice strong support on behalf of tens of thousands of their members. Over 250 businesses and organizations have joined the Wabanaki Alliance Tribal Coalition — including the newly formed "Businesses for Wabanaki Sovereignty," a forum for businesses around the state supporting the inherent sovereignty of the Wabanaki Nations.

The Wabanaki have been left out of a nationwide Native American resurgency.

It's time to remove the barriers that have kept the Wabanaki, along with their neighbors in rural Maine, from achieving the dramatic and sustained economic growth achieved over the past 40 years by 570 federal tribes across Indian Country.