

DEMOCRACY ME

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE
MAINE CITIZENS FOR CLEAN ELECTIONS
MAINE STUDENTS VOTE



PO Box 18187
Portland ME 04112



(207) 622-0256



info@DemocracyMaine.org

LWVME Position on Wabanaki Tribal Sovereignty

3/25/233 – Adopted by Democracy Maine

The League of Women Voters of Maine stands with Wabanaki communities and their claim to tribal sovereignty.

LWVME recognizes that tribal sovereignty means respecting the right to self-government for Wabanaki peoples. Many of the best features of American democracy were influenced by principles of equality, freedom, and respect that were common in tribal governments — much more common than in European governments at the time. Our founders were inspired by these examples as they envisioned individual liberty in our new nation. By recognizing tribal sovereignty, we reaffirm our belief in government “of the people, by the people, and for the people,” the most foundational principle of our democracy.

Background

LWVUS does not have positions that directly address tribal sovereignty or the rights of indigenous people. However, the principles and positions laid out in the [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policy](#), as well as the [Equality of Opportunity position](#), can be used to underpin action in this area. For example, from Impact on Issues, page 10: “The League of Women Voters believes every citizen should be protected in the right to vote; every person should have access to free public education that provides equal opportunity for all; and no person or group should suffer legal, economic, or administrative discrimination.”

Tribes in Maine have not benefited from 151 federal laws¹ which have been passed since

¹Suffolk University, Report to the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Landclaims Settlement Act, <http://legislature.maine.gov/doc/3636>

Useful Links:

[Board Members](#)

[Board Policies](#)

the 1980 Maine Indian Land Claim Settlement Act was signed, including laws impacting housing, education, employment equality, food security, healthcare, and healthcare access. In January, 2020, the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indians Land Claim Settlement Implementing Act issued its [consensus recommendations](#) that, taken together, constitute what we call “tribal sovereignty.” This task force included tribal chiefs and legislative leaders from both political parties. In 2022, Harvard researchers found that lack of sovereignty has negatively impacted the economic development of Wabanaki tribes and the surrounding communities.²

In the 130th legislature, the League joined the Wabanaki Alliance — a coalition of over 90 non-profit, faith-based, and racial and social justice organizations under the leadership of the Wabanaki tribes. In allyship with the tribes, we respect the sovereignty of Wabanaki peoples by basing our specific advocacy agenda in this area on the direction of the Wabanaki Alliance.

In the 130th legislature, two hundred thirty-four League members and volunteers submitted written testimony in favor of [LD 1626](#), which encompassed the recommendations of the Task Force. LD 1626 passed in the House and Senate but died on the Special Appropriations Table at the end of the legislative session. We will continue to advocate for the full recognition of sovereignty for the Wabanaki tribes in the 131st session (2023-2024).

2

<https://ash.harvard.edu/publications/economic-and-social-impacts-restrictions-applicability-federal-indian-policies>

Useful Links:

[Board Members](#)

[Board Policies](#)