



USET

SOVEREIGNTY PROTECTION FUND

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Transmitted via email

April 27, 2018

The Honorable John Hoeven
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
338 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
531 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rob Bishop
House Committee on Natural Resources
123 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
House Committee on Natural Resources
1511 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Doug LaMalfa
House Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska
Native Affairs
322 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ruben Gallego
House Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska
Native Affairs
1218 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Support for the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Reservation Reaffirmation Act

Dear Chairman Hoeven, Vice Chairman Udall, Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, Chairman LaMalfa and Ranking Member Gallego,

We write on behalf of United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF) to respectfully urge the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, and the House Natural Resources Committee and its Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs, to ensure swift enactment of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Reservation Reaffirmation Act (H.R. 5244 and S. 2628).

USET SPF is an intertribal organization comprised of twenty-seven federally recognized Tribal Nations, ranging from Maine to Florida to Texas¹. USET SPF is dedicated to enhancing the development of federally recognized Tribal Nations, to improving the capabilities of Tribal governments, and assisting USET SPF Member Tribal Nations in dealing effectively with public policy issues and in serving the broad needs of Indian people.

¹ USET SPF member Tribal Nations include: Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas (TX), Aroostook Band of Micmac Indians (ME), Catawba Indian Nation (SC), Cayuga Nation (NY), Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (NC), Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians (ME), Jena Band of Choctaw Indians (LA), Mashantucket Pequot Indian Tribe (CT), Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe (MA), Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida (FL), Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MS), Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut (CT), Narragansett Indian Tribe (RI), Oneida Indian Nation (NY), Pamunkey Indian Tribe (VA), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township (ME), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point (ME), Penobscot Indian Nation (ME), Poarch Band of Creek Indians (AL), Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (NY), Seminole Tribe of Florida (FL), Seneca Nation of Indians (NY), Shinnecock Indian Nation (NY), Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana (LA), and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) (MA).

The Tribal land base is a core aspect of Tribal sovereignty, cultural identity, and represents the foundation of our Tribal economies. USET SPF Tribal Nations, including the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, continue to work to reacquire our homelands, which are a fundamental to our existence as sovereign governments and our ability to thrive as vibrant, healthy, self-sufficient communities. And as our partner in the trust relationship, it is incumbent upon the federal government to prioritize the restoration of our land bases.

However, the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe's reservation -- which was established with the strong support of surrounding local governments -- is threatened by litigation brought by a group of individual citizens opposed to Tribal sovereignty. This jeopardizes the ability of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe to rebuild its economy and provide essential government services to its citizens, which are the fundamental goals of the land-into-trust process. The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Reservation Reaffirmation Act simply provides legal certainty to the status of the Tribe's trust land, allowing these efforts to proceed forward.

As a federally-recognized Tribal Nation, it is critical for the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe to restore its homelands. We urge Congress to use its authority to ensure that the Mashpee Tribe is not forever rendered perpetually landless by enacting the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Reservation Reaffirmation Act. Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact Ms. Liz Malerba, USET SPF Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs, at LMalerba@usetinc.org or 202-624-3550.

Sincerely,



Kirk Francis
President



Kitcki A. Carroll
Executive Director