

Cherokees And Choctaws Oppose Federal Recognition Of Lumbee Tribe By Federal Government

By Administrator

Wednesday, 25 November 2020 10:55 -

(Cherokee, North Carolina) – Richard Sneed, the Principal Chief of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and Cyrus Ben, Tribal Chief of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, released the following letter to Congress opposing the Lumbee Recognition Act. Other tribal leaders have expressed similar opposition, including the Cherokee Nation and the United South and Eastern Tribes(USET), representing over 30 tribes.

Chiefs Ben and Sneed note in their letter that “For over a century, the Lumbees have claimed to be Cherokee, Croatan, Siouan, Cheraw, Tuscarora, and other unrelated tribes but have never been able to demonstrate any historical or genealogical tie to any historical tribe. Instead of demonstrating credible ties to historic tribes, they abandon one claim for another when challenges to their identity are asserted. H.R. 1964 would even prevent a serious review of the Lumbee claims that its current membership has Native American ancestry.”

Chief Sneed commented on House passage of the legislation on Monday saying, “***Tribal recognition should not be granted when so much doubt and uncertainty remain over the Lumbees’ lineage and genealogy. It is dangerous to pass legislation that short-circuits an established process designed to protect Native American history and identity. That is exactly what H.R. 1964 does and we urge the Senate to reject this bill.***”

A copy of the letter is attached and below:

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

We write to express our opposition to the Lumbee Recognition Act, legislation that would extend federal acknowledgment as a Tribal Nation to the Lumbees in North Carolina and circumvent the Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA) administrative process at the U.S. Department of the Interior.

For over a century, the Lumbees have claimed to be Cherokee, Croatan, Siouan, Cheraw, Tuscarora, and other unrelated tribes but have never been able to demonstrate any historical or genealogical tie to any historic tribe. Instead of demonstrating credible ties to historic tribes, they abandon one claim for another when challenges to their identity are asserted. H.R. 1964

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would even prevent a serious review of the Lumbee claims that its current membership has Native American ancestry.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has not scored this bill since 2011, when it issued a score of \$847 million. Today, the cost of this bill exceeds \$1 billion, which would have devastating impacts on Tribal Nations reliant upon federal health care, education, and other services provided through the Indian Health Service (IHS) and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

The consideration of this bill demonstrates this country's broken politics in its relations with Tribal Nations. The Lumbee should pursue federal recognition through the OFA administrative process at the Department of Interior, where experts and procedures are in place, and not through an Act of Congress. With enormous need across Indian country related to the COVID-19 response, reacquisition of land, protection of natural resources, and protection of Native women and children, federal swing state politics has overwhelmed sound federal policy and the priorities of tribal governments with whom the United States has treaties and trust relations.

We urge you and your respective members to vote no.

Sincerely,

Richard Sneed
Principal Chief, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
Cyrus Ben
Tribal Chief, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians