

November 13, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
1236 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn H.O.B.
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Opposition to the “Lumbee Recognition Act” (H.R. 1964)

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 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).

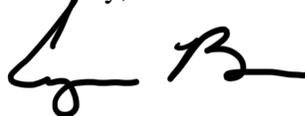
The consideration of this bill demonstrates this country’s broken politics in its relations with Tribal Nations. The Lumbee should pursue federal recognition through the OFA administrative process at the Department of Interior, where experts and procedures are in place, and not through an Act of Congress. 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.



Principal Chief Richard Sneed
Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

Sincerely,



Cyrus Ben, Tribal Chief
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians