

Press Release  
Office of Congressman Jim Moran  
April 25, 2007

**Resources Committee Passes Moran Tribal Recognition Bill**  
*Sovereignty Momentum Builds as Jamestown Anniversary Approaches*

Washington, D.C., April 25th – The House Natural Resources Committee today approved legislation (H.R. 1294), authored by Rep. Jim Moran (D-VA), granting the six Virginia tribes their long awaited recognition from the U.S. federal government. Momentum to enact this legislation by the start of the Jamestown Anniversary continues to build.

“The Resources Committee, under Chairman Rahall’s leadership, understands that the Virginia tribes greatly deserve federal recognition. The Native Americans who greeted the first English settlers at Jamestown have been ignored by the federal government for 400 years. Today, with the Committee’s action, we are a step closer to righting this historical injustice.”

This is the first time the Virginia tribes’ recognition bill (H.R. 1294) has passed the authorizing committee in the House. It represents a major step forward for the bill and greatly improves chances it will be considered on the House floor.

Despite the tribes’ stated opposition to gaming (and limitations which were written into the original bill), in order to placate those concerned that this legislation might still open the door to gambling interests, the bill was amended in committee to prohibit any federal circumstance under which the tribes might one day pursue gaming. The aforementioned amendment makes the tribes subject to state law for the purposes of gaming. This means that the Virginia tribes would be treated the same as any private citizen, interest or municipality in Virginia as it relates to gaming activities. Virginia law currently allows bingo for charitable purposes. No tribe has pursued this option.

Currently, 562 tribes in the United States have received federal recognition. Unlike most tribes who were federally recognized after signing treaties with the U.S. government, the Virginia tribes’ treaties were with the Kings of England. The most significant one occurred in 1677, well before the establishment of the United States. All six tribes have received official recognition from the Commonwealth of Virginia, but the federal government has yet to follow suit.

Since English settlers landed on what is now Virginia soil at Jamestown in 1607, Virginia’s Native American tribes have played an integral role in the history of Virginia, including helping settlers survive those first harsh winters. Unfortunately, through much of the last 400-years, Native Americans have been brutally and systematically mistreated.

This racial hostility culminated with the enactment and brutal enforcement of Virginia’s Racial Integrity Act of 1924. The act empowered zealots, like Walter Plecker, a state official, to destroy records and reclassify in Orwellian fashion all non-whites as “colored.” To call oneself a “Native American” in Virginia was to risk a jail sentence of up to one year. Married couples were denied marriage certificates or even unable to obtain the release of their newborn child

from a hospital until they changed their ethnicity on the state record to read “colored,” not “Native American.” For much of the 20th Century admission to public school education was denied. Even after federally enforced integration, states and localities refused to provide bus service to the public high schools.

‘The eyes of the world turn to Jamestown next month for the 400th Anniversary. Our goal is for the Virginia tribes to share that spotlight, proudly representing a living history of the Commonwealth as Virginia’s fully recognized Native American tribes.’”

Virginia’s six tribes seeking recognition include: the Chickahominy Tribe, Chickahominy Indian Tribe Eastern Division, the Upper Mattaponi, the Rappahannock Tribe, the Monacan Tribe, and the Nansemond Tribe.

Original cosponsors include: Neil Abercrombie (D-HI), Jo Ann Davis (R-VA), Tom Davis (R-VA), Dale Kildee (D-MI), Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Nick Rahall (D-WV), and Bobby Scott (D-VA).