

PHILIP B. SCOTT
GOVERNOR



State of Vermont
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

April 20, 2022

Vermont General Assembly
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Re: H. 556, An act relating to exempting property owned by Vermont-recognized Native American Tribes from property tax

Dear Legislators:

Today, I signed H. 556, *An act relating to exempting property owned by Vermont-recognized Native American tribes from property tax*. It is my understanding this bill was crafted narrowly in order to benefit only Vermont's four state-recognized Native American tribes, the official, registered non-profit entities of the tribes and non-profit tribal purposes. I sign it out of respect for the heritage of our Native American communities and traditions. Further, the associated costs to the Education Fund and the General Fund borne by all Vermonters are forecast to be negligible.

However, I would like to further explain my understanding of what this bill is not intended to do. 1 V.S.A. § 853(h) makes clear State recognition of Native American tribes shall not be construed to create, extend, or form the basis of any right or claim to land or real estate in Vermont. I signed this bill today with the understanding that, despite the language used by the Legislature, nothing in this bill is intended to supersede the express provisions of Chapter 23 of Title 1 of the Vermont Statutes.

Finally, I have also relied on the assumptions of the Legislature's Joint Fiscal Office that no additional non-profits will be created to take advantage of this bill's benefits and the bill will not allow for or incentivize land transfers exclusively for the purpose of avoiding taxation. I would expect the Legislature to take action to correct any consequences which would further increase costs to all Vermonters because of this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip B. Scott", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Philip B. Scott
Governor

PBS/kp