

Virginia Tribal Nations Celebrate General Assembly Passage of Tribal Consultation Bill

RICHMOND, VA, USA, March 18, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Virginia General Assembly passed a bill affirming the Commonwealth's obligation to consult with federally recognized Tribal Nations before granting state permits for projects that may impact tribal cultural, historical, and environmental interests.



This bill is a win-win for the Commonwealth, private developers, and Tribal Nations."

*Chief Anne Richardson,
Rappahannock Tribe*

The bill directs agencies to develop tribal consultation policies and to consult with Tribal Nations on certain permits, such as for large groundwater withdrawals, cave collection permits, and permits for the removal of underwater historic property.

"This bill demonstrates that Virginia is a good place to do business," said Chief Frank Adams of the Upper Mattaponi

Indian Tribe. "Companies can invest in Virginia with confidence in a clear and straightforward system for engaging with Tribes and other stakeholders."

HB 1157 received bipartisan support in the Virginia House of Delegates and the Senate. The bill codifies Executive Order 82 (2021). It is consistent with promises Virginia made in the Treaty of Middle Plantation in 1677 and mirrors tribal consultation requirements already in place at the federal level.

"We thank the bipartisan group of leaders in the General Assembly who passed this bill," said Chief Stephen Adkins of the Chickahominy Indian Tribe. "They demonstrated a commitment to practical solutions that help the Commonwealth and Virginia's Tribal Nations work together efficiently."

Because the new process for tribal consultations in the Commonwealth is aligned with the federal process for tribal consultations, project developers will find the process familiar and efficient. Many projects require both state and federal permits. Developers will find that they can use the same processes to satisfy both federal and state consultation requirements.

"This bill is a win-win for the Commonwealth, private developers, and Tribal Nations," said Chief Anne Richardson of the Rappahannock Tribe. "Early consultation avoids unnecessary conflict. Tribal leaders can help identify and resolve any potential design issues early in the planning

process.”

The bill requires that tribes give consent before the state grants a permit to disturb the graves of their ancestors.

“We thank Del. Krizek and Sen. Marsden for their leadership,” said Chief Diane Shields of the Monacan Indian Nation. “They recognized the pain that we would feel if the final resting places of our families were moved against our wishes. This bill ensures that we don’t need to fear the desecration of our ancestors’ graves. Instead, we can feel confident that the Commonwealth is committed to respecting our long ties to this land. We share a deep desire to enhance the quality of life for all Virginia residents.”

HB 1157 was championed in the House by Del. Paul Krizek and in the Senate by Sen. David Marsden. The bill is now awaiting Governor Youngkin’s signature.

Marion Werkheiser
Cultural Heritage Partners, PLLC
+1 703-489-6059
marion@culturalheritagepartners.com

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