

# Government Administration and Elections Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No:** HJ-33 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

**Title:** RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING NATIVE AMERICAN STEWARDSHIP.

**Vote Date:** 3/11/2026

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 3/4/2026

**File No.:** 116

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Government Administration and Elections Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would emphasize a deep local history through land acknowledgment. Also, the peoples who have inhabited the land before the State of Connecticut would be recognized for being on this land.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None Expressed

### NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

#### [Cathy Osten Connecticut State Senator](#)

State Senator Osten notes that the state has come a long way to recognize the contributions of Native communities within the state. She states that this bill would acknowledge the complex history between the state of Connecticut and the native tribes that stewarded long before the arrival of European settlers. Senator Osten notes that “land acknowledgment is a traditional custom that dates back centuries in many Native nations and communities” and that she is looking forward to working with the committee on the passage of this bill.

#### [James Gessner The Mohegan Tribe Chair](#)

James Gessner notes that this resolution aligns with the Tribe’s long-standing government to government relationship. He states that this relationship has been grounded in mutual respect, collaboration, and the shared stewardship of land.

#### [Bob Wall Sustainable Fairfield Chair](#)

Bob Wall states that Sustainable Fairfield has been using land acknowledgements at the beginning of their meetings. He then quotes part of this acknowledgement “We do not inherit the land from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.” Wall notes that this “ideology is one of respect for future generations, a foundation of Native philosophy and teachings, and we welcome that stewardship.”

[Jennifer Kleindienst CT resident](#)

Jennifer Kleindienst states that she is in support of this bill, however she has recommendations of the bill. She states that HJ 33 does not do enough to repair the current and past harms, native communities in the state have experienced.

[Erin Alvey](#)

Erin Alvey stated that this resolution gives recognition to smaller state recognized tribes. She states that this is important as a pathway to national and federal recognition. The process of acknowledgement can facilitate repatriation and better co-management of natural resources by local communities and the state. Erin also notes that other states like California, have taken on similar projects with AB 1248 in 2024.

[Richard Velky Schaghticoke Tribal Nation Chief](#)

Richard Velky Chief of the Schaghticoke states that as the representative of the Schaghticoke Nation, a body of three hundred members located in Western Connecticut. Richard Velky states that as the longest recognized indigenous tribe in the state they have a unique perspective on the history that has brought many different people together to live on this land. He also states however that he has some concerns such as, he was unsure as to what this amendment was attempting to accomplish, would land be repatriated and how much land, and lastly, how can the seven tribes listed in the resolution trust that the state will honor any agreement made in the resolution, given only five of those tribes are officially recognized by the state?

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

[Michele May](#)

She states that while they appreciate the history of all peoples, they regard America as one nation under God, which should not be divided by identity politics. They specify that Land acknowledgments indicate sovereignty and guilt.

[Anonymous 39](#)

Opposes this resolution because they regard constitutional amendments as reserved for major policy.

**Reported by: Geva Tinker**

**Date: March 17, 2026**