

## Tribe marches against decision

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — More than 150 supporters of the Narragansett Indian Tribe chanted, drummed and marched to the Statehouse on Saturday, protesting a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision that limits the tribe's ability to govern its land free from state and local laws.

The march and rally at a nearby park targeted a February court decision that prevented the federal government from placing tribal land in trust for tribes such as the Narragansetts that were federally recognized after Congress passed the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act.

"The decision cannot be allowed to remain standing," said Randy Noka, a member of the Narragansett Tribal Council. "We're prepared to go where we have to go to correct the injustice."

The case began in 1991, when the tribe purchased a 31-acre lot in Charlestown for economic development and to build elderly housing and applied to place it under federal trust, which would largely free the parcel from

state and local laws.

Gov. Don Carcieri and other state officials worried the Narragansetts would create a tax-free zone undercutting local businesses or build a casino, banned under state law. Lawyers for the state argued the tribe cannot remove its land from state control using the Indian Reorganization Act because the Narragansett tribe was not recognized by the U.S. government when the act passed 75 years ago.

Saturday's march began with a ceremony at Roger Williams Park, where the crowd gathered in a circle and some smoked a peace pipe. The marchers then traveled to the Statehouse before moving to an area park to hear several speeches.

Many carried signs, some reading "Return our Native Rights" or "Recognize and Respect Your Neighbors."

Narragansett Chief Sachem Matthew Thomas said the tribe would push Congress to change laws governing tribal lands and would work to elect sympathetic leaders.

Tribal elder Paulla Dove Jennings said the Narragansetts have welcomed all people to

Rhode Island, beginning with the earliest settlers, but have not received the same respect.

"We have been damaged by the people in this state," she said. "Many of you have felt the same thing, but this is our land, and we welcomed all of you here."

The rally was organized by United for Justice, an advocacy group that includes other American Indian tribes and community organizations in Rhode Island. It hopes to expand into work with other minority groups.

"We didn't just want to focus on our oppression," said Bella Noka, Randy Noka's wife and co-chairwoman of United for Justice. "There are many people feeling our same pain."

It remains unclear how far-reaching the Supreme Court ruling will prove. Lawyers for the Native American Rights Fund, which provides legal representation to tribes, have said that dozens of tribes could be affected, while lawyers for Rhode Island argued the number was potentially in the hundreds.

## Gov. supports recognition of tribes

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Gov. Timothy Kaine said last week that the federal government should give six Virginia Indian tribes the recognition they have been seeking for years.

Kaine testified before the House Committee on Natural Resources in Washington on behalf of legislation sponsored by Rep. Jim Moran, a Democrat from northern Virginia, and supported by other members of the state's congressional delegation.

The bill would grant recognition of the Eastern

Chickahominy, Chickahominy, Upper Mattaponi (MAT'-ah-puh-NY'), Rappahannock, Monacan and Nansemond tribes. They have been seeking the recognition since the 1990s.

It would allow the tribes' 3,000 members to receive federal money for housing, education and senior care. More than 560 other tribes nationwide are federally recognized.

Kaine and Moran also noted that the legislation would ban the tribes from operating gambling casinos, a concern that has blocked previous attempts at federal recognition.

Kaine said the tribes were integral in the success of the British settlement of Jamestown in 1607, and hence the founding of the United States. Virginia tribes entered into peace treaties with the English well before the nation's existence, and since the Civil War their members have served in the U.S. military, often earning high honors, Kaine said. Kaine also noted that recognition has been difficult to obtain because tribe members' identities were stripped away by Virginia's Racial Integrity Act, a state law in effect from 1924 to 1967.

## Conference on Media-American Indian

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — The relationship between American Indians and the media is the subject of the 17th annual American Conference on Indian Histories and Culture at South Dakota State University.

The event is scheduled for March 30-April 1.

Charles Trimble, an Oglala Sioux tribal member and principal founder of the American Indian Press Association, is scheduled to deliver the keynote

address March 31. Joseph Brewer, one of the conference co-coordinators, says the conference includes indigenous scholars who have each used or engaged the media in their own way and on their own terms.

## State-tribal collaboration bill passes

SANTA FE (AP) — Lawmakers have sent Gov. Bill Richardson a measure designed to promote cooperation between state government and Indian tribes.

It requires every cabinet-level state agency to designate a tribal liaison who would report directly to the head of

the agency.

It also orders state agencies to develop policies promoting better communication and culturally appropriate delivery of services.

And it mandates an annual state-tribal summit between the New Mexico governor and Indian leaders.

Tribal officials urged the Legislature to endorse the bill when they came to the Capitol last month for a joint session of the House and Senate. The House passed it unanimously on Sunday, sending it to the governor. The Senate had passed it unanimously earlier.

## Senate agrees to lift ban on Indian development

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate has voted to lift a 43-year-old ban on development on about 700,000 acres in Arizona's Black Mesa region that was disputed by Navajo and Hopi tribes for decades.

The Senate unanimously

approved a bill by Arizona senators John McCain and Jon Kyl Thursday night to lift a ban on development in the "Bennett freeze zone." The ban had prevented about 8,000 people who live there from making improvements to their homes.

Action by the House is still

required, but no opposition is expected.

The ban was imposed in 1966 by former Bureau of Indian Affairs administrator Robert Bennett as the two tribes argued over rights to the land. The dispute was resolved in 2005.



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