

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE**



**NORWICH BRANCH**  
**P.O. BOX 24 • NORWICH, CONNECTICUT • 06360 • (860) 886-1686**

**Jacqueline Owens**  
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**Lonnie Braxton, Esq.**  
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September 25, 2013

Ms. Elizabeth Appel (RE: 1076-AF18)  
Office of Regulatory Affairs and Collaborative Action  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W., MS-414-MIB  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Ms. Elizabeth Appel:

The Norwich Branch of Connecticut of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was established in 1963 to continue the work of the National Organization within the state of Connecticut. The Norwich Branch believes that the NAACP's goals of equality, justice and civil rights for all people are as timely today as they were when the national organization was founded in 1909.

The Norwich Branch of Connecticut of NAACP submits this letter of support of the proposed Draft Rule Federal Acknowledgment of Indian Tribes 25C.F.R 83 from the U.S. Department of the Interior, (DOI) Office of the Assistant Secretary. Thank you for the opportunity to address this important "rights" issue. We applaud the DOI for its work to create a fair and equitable acknowledgement process for all Native American tribes.

We particularly support DOI's flexibility to account for unique tribal histories. The Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation in Connecticut has a reservation which was established by the colonial government in 1683 and they have maintained continuous control over that reservation to the present day.

We particularly support DOI's efforts to improve the acknowledgment process to make sure that petitions may move through the process in an efficient and timely fashion being mindful of the limited resources of tribes. We believe that the current process with its unduly and burdensome delays serves an injustice to tribes such as the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation. Their petition was filed in 1978 to become eligible for federal housing,

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education and healthcare programs for its community but it languished for more than two decades before a preliminary positive decision was issued in 2000 and a final positive decision was issued in 2002.

We believe that justice requires that DOI maintain the accuracy and integrity of its acknowledgement decisions. It is unbelievably unfair to find that within an extremely brief period from 2003 to 2005 DOI, in response to an appeal to the Interior Board of Indian Appeals (IBIA) filed by the Connecticut Attorney General and surrounding towns, issued an unprecedented decision which stripped away the positive acknowledgement decisions which took the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation over 20 years to attain.

We believe that the draft regulations are a crucial step in the right direction to insure fair and just decisions and disallow political opposition to overturn positive acknowledgement decisions developed over decades with much sacrifice from the tribal communities. We applaud your courage and commitment to improve this process in the interest of justice for all tribes.

We request that you consider the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as adopted by the United States and President Barack Obama. We especially note that the Declaration requires that the government and states in consultation with indigenous people combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and promote good relations among indigenous people.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Owens  
Branch President