

United States Senate

September 18, 2019

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Inhofe, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Reed, and Ranking Member Thornberry:

Thank you for your dedicated efforts to put together a strong, bipartisan National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for the defense of our nation and in support of our men and women in uniform. As you negotiate a conference report, I ask that you retain Section 6020 of the Senate-passed NDAA, which extends federal recognition to the Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians of Montana.

The Little Shell Tribe has been negotiating with the federal government since the late 19th century and has pursued federal recognition for over eight decades. Over this time, countless bureaucratic hurdles have left the Little Shell Tribe suffering as they fight for the respect and recognition they deserve. The time has come for Congress to act and provide the Little Shell tribe with long-overdue federal recognition.

The Little Shell Tribe has been recognized by the State of Montana, and federal recognition is supported by Montana's congressional delegation, Governor, Attorney General, state legislature, and all of Montana's federally recognized tribes. In Congress, federal recognition of the Little Shell Tribe holds strong bipartisan support in both chambers. H.R. 297, introduced by Congressman Gianforte, overwhelmingly passed the House earlier this year and S. 51, which I introduced with Senator Tester, was unanimously approved by the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. The text of Section 6020 is similar to both H.R. 297 and S. 51.

I urge you to preserve Section 6020 of the Senate-passed NDAA in the final version. The people of the Little Shell Tribe have waited lifetimes for their sovereignty and dignity to be recognized, and it is time for Congress to finally provide the federal recognition the Little Shell Tribe has earned.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,



STEVE DAINES
United States Senator