



Native American Business Alliance Long Island

PRESS RELEASE

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Long Island Indian Nations Form Alliance to Protect Own Businesses: Alliance Launches Grassroots Campaign to Defend Rights

Long Island—The Unkechaug and Shinnecock Indian Nations of Long Island, N.Y., today announced the creation of the Native American Business Alliance of Long Island, beginning a grassroots movement to defend their right to sell tax-free tobacco products.

“We have formed this coalition because without help from our friends, neighbors and business colleagues, a vital source of our economic activity will be halted,” said Shinnecock tribal chair Lance Gumbs. “Selling tax-free tobacco is a long-standing right that was created under centuries-old treaties. It is a crucial source of our self-sufficiency—that means over a hundred jobs for Indians and non-Indians.”

Politicians, backed by wealthy special interest groups, have passed legislation that threatens to terminate centuries-old treaties protecting the right of New York Tribes to sell tax-free tobacco and other goods on their own reservations. With over 5,000 supporters thus far, the Alliance is demanding that new legislation be enacted rescinding this unjust act. The Alliance is also urging New York citizens to call upon the convenience stores and big chain supermarkets, asking them to drop their lawsuits against these small Indian smoke shops. New York convenience stores and supermarket chains have filed multiple taxpayer lawsuits in an attempt to force Indians to renounce treaties that have stood for hundreds of years.

The income from Indian smoke shops helps Tribes pay their own way, using some of the profits to fix schools, community centers, playgrounds and housing on reservations. They also employ hundreds of tribal members with full healthcare and retirement benefits and generate economic activity for local, non-Indian businesses that supply their stores.

“Portions of our smoke shop profits are put directly back into the reservation for community development and scholarships,” Unkechaug tribal chief Harry Wallace said. “Without the income from our treaty-backed tax-free tobacco sales, we will take giant steps backward in our path toward economic independence.”

New Yorkers can join the Alliance by going to www.SupportNativeBusiness.com, where they can sign a petition, write directly to state officials, and get additional information.

Chairman Lance Gumbs and Chief Harry Wallace are available for press interviews beginning May 24, 2006 at 12:00 PM. To schedule an interview, please call (631) 924-1780.

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