



the Catawba Nation
Office of Tribal Government

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**Catawba Nation thanks U.S. Congress
for passage of the Catawba Indian Nation Lands Act**

*House and Senate overwhelmingly vote to reaffirm U.S. Department of the Interior's Action
in March 2020 to take land in North Carolina into trust for the Catawba Nation*

Passage of this historic legislation is the final step in a decades-long fight

*U.S. Congress, U.S. Department of the Interior, State of North Carolina and U.S. District Court of
the District of Columbia have now acted in support of the Catawba Nation*

KINGS MOUNTAIN, N.C. – The Catawba Nation today voiced its thanks and appreciation of the U.S. Congress for its passage of the Catawba Indian Nation Lands Act.

The bill was part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which today passed the Senate by a vote of 89 to 10 after passing the House of Representatives on Dec. 7 in a vote of 363-70. The House had first voiced its overwhelming bipartisan support of the Catawba Indian Nation Lands Act (H.R. 8255) in a 361-55 vote on Nov. 1.

President Biden is expected to sign the NDAA, and thus the Catawba Indian Nation Lands Act, into law in the coming days.

“On behalf of all Catawba citizens, I want to thank the original prime sponsors of this legislation, Rep. James Clyburn and Sen. Lindsey Graham, for their leadership throughout this process,” Catawba Nation Chief Bill Harris said. “Additionally, I’d like to thank U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, Sen. Richard Burr and Sen. Thom Tillis for their strong support of righting this historical wrong.”

Harris also once again thanked the measure’s bipartisan House sponsors in addition to Rep. Clyburn: Rep. Alma Adams, Rep. William Timmons, Rep. David Price, Rep. Joe Wilson and Rep. G.K. Butterfield.

“The Catawba Indian Nation Lands Act reaffirms the U.S. Department of Interior’s action recognizing our historical and ancestral ties to North Carolina. Congress, Interior, the State of North Carolina and a federal court have now all confirmed what the Catawba people have said from the beginning – these lands are the ancestral homelands of the Catawba people, and we intend to use them to improve the life of all the people in the community,” Harris said.



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The Department of Interior had completed a thorough, years-long review prior to its March 2020 action taking 17 acres of land into trust status in Cleveland County for the Catawba Nation. It confirmed that the Catawba Nation’s aboriginal lands extend to six North Carolina counties and farther north in the Piedmont of North Carolina, as evidenced by names such as Catawba County and Catawba College. The six counties in North Carolina are part of the Catawba’s service area as defined by the U.S. Congress in 1993.

“These are the lands of not just our ancestors, but also the hundreds of Catawba citizens residing there today,” Harris said. “Make no mistake, this legislation means more people will have good paying jobs, more kids will have a better education and more people will have better housing and health care. That’s what this bill really means.”

Like many other instances reflecting current effects of historical inequities, the Catawba Nation experiences high unemployment and poverty rates, and many of its citizens rely upon the Federal and state governments for basic social services. The enactment of this legislation will therefore help the Catawba secure economic self-sufficiency as originally envisioned by Congress in passing the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988.

The new law also confirms that the Catawba Nation is subject to the well-established rules and regulations of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act on their modern and ancestral lands in the State of North Carolina.

The Department of Interior’s action was also reaffirmed in April by a ruling from the U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia in rejecting a lawsuit filed against the department by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in 2020. The Eastern Band has since filed an appeal, which is proceeding in the U.S. Court of Appeals.

“The enactment into law of our lands act will likely have a significant impact on the Eastern Band’s appeal,” Harris said, noting the Catawba, a party to the lawsuit, are reviewing that.

The Catawba also have a compact with the State of North Carolina, which in March was approved by the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Indian Affairs, to share revenue from the Catawba Two Kings Casino in Kings Mountain, a sustainable economic engine and jobs creator for residents of Cleveland County.

The Catawba Two Kings Casino pre-launch facility opened with 500 gaming machines on July 1 with widespread community support. Its immediate success in the summer prompted the Catawba to begin site work in September on an expansion of the facility to add 500 gaming machines, which opened today. The Catawba are simultaneously continuing planning for the permanent casino resort project.

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