

TO AUTHORIZE, RATIFY, AND CONFIRM THE AGREEMENT
OF SETTLEMENT AND COMPROMISE TO RESOLVE THE
AKWESASNE MOHAWK LAND CLAIM IN THE STATE OF
NEW YORK, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

OCTOBER 31, 2025.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State
of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. WESTERMAN, from the Committee on Natural Resources,
submitted the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany H.R. 2916]

The Committee on Natural Resources, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 2916) to authorize, ratify, and confirm the Agreement of Settlement and Compromise to Resolve the Akwesasne Mohawk Land Claim in the State of New York, and for other purposes, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon without amendment and recommends that the bill do pass.

PURPOSE OF THE LEGISLATION

The purpose of H.R. 2916 is to authorize, ratify, and confirm the Agreement of Settlement and Compromise to Resolve the Akwesasne Mohawk Land Claim in the State of New York, and for other purposes.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

H.R. 2916 would authorize, ratify, and confirm the Akwesasne Mohawk Land Claim Settlement Agreement and bring reconciliation after four decades of uncertainty.

The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (SRMT) is located on the border of New York State and Canada, along the St. Lawrence River. SMRT's U.S. reservation spans two counties, covering roughly 14,648 acres.¹ On the Canadian side of the border, the reservation

¹ Tiller, Veronica E. Velarde. Tiller's Guide to Indian Country: Economic Profiles of American Indian Reservations. 3rd ed. Pg. 582.

occupies approximately 7,400 acres under the jurisdiction of SRMT's counterpart, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (MCA).²

The SRMT is part of the Iroquois Confederacy, with ancestral lands spanning over 15,000 square miles from the St. Lawrence River to the Delaware River, and from the West-Canada Unadilla Creek to the Hudson River.³ Despite migration in the 1600s and 1700s, the Mohawks remained in the area. Following the Revolutionary War, the Seven Nations of Canada and the State of New York signed the 1796 treaty, which gave the SRMT its reservation.⁴ In 1824 and 1825, the State of New York acquired land from the SRMT (SMR Land); however, this transaction did not involve the federal government. Under the Non-Intercourse Act,⁵ one of the earliest federal statutes, the United States had the exclusive right to acquire Indian lands. As the federal government did not participate in the transfer of the SRMT Land, the SRMT and its Canadian counterpart, MCA, have sought to invalidate the transaction and return these lands to tribal ownership.

Since 1982, legal battles have plagued the question of who should own the SRM Land in New York.⁶ The SRMT, the State of New York, Franklin and St. Lawrence Counties, and the New York Power Authority (NYPA) have engaged in litigation, working through the court system and different iterations of a settlement to come to an agreement on the land claim settlement.⁷ The settlement at the core of H.R. 2916 reflects the culmination of years of work by all parties involved.

Under the agreement, the SRMT receives approximately 3,500 acres of land returned to reservation status, including the Hogansburg Triangle, and can acquire, from willing sellers, up to 14,000 additional acres. Higher education tuition and mandatory fees are waived for all Akwesasne Mohawk students attending a State University of New York institution. SRMT will acquire 9 megawatts of power from NYPA at a preferred rate. Additionally, the settlement does not require federal monetary contribution, the SRMT will adhere to all New York State building codes, and there are clear boundaries for the SRMT's reservation regarding judicial jurisdiction with a forum for disagreement resolution through discussion rather than the court system.⁸

Negotiated settlements related to Indian land claims under the Non-Intercourse Act require congressional approval, in this case through the legislative process.⁹ H.R. 2916 would settle this outstanding issue.

²*Id.*

³*Id.*

⁴*Id.*

⁵25 U.S.C. 177.

⁶*See, e.g., Canadian St. Regis Band of Mohawk Indians v. New York*, 146 F. Supp. 2d 170 (N.D.N.Y. 2001); *Canadian St. Regis Band of Mohawk Indians v. New York*, 573 F. Supp. 1530 (N.D.N.Y. 1983).

⁷*Id.*

⁸Agreement of Settlement and Compromise to Resolve the Akwesasne Mohawk Land Claim in the State of New York. On file. The Office of Congresswoman Elise Stefanik. Stefanik Introduces Legislation Ratifying the Akwesasne Mohawk Land Claim Settlement Agreement. April 2025. <https://stefanik.house.gov/2025/4/stefanik-introduces-legislation-ratifying-the-akwesasne-mohawk-land-claim-settlement-agreement>.

⁹25 U.S.C. § 177.

COMMITTEE ACTION

H.R. 2916 was introduced on April 14, 2025, by Representative Elise Stefanik (R-NY). The bill was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources, and within the Committee to the Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs. On June 11, 2025, the Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs held a hearing on the bill. On September 17, 2025, the Committee on Natural Resources met to consider the bill. The Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs was discharged from further consideration of H.R. 2916 by unanimous consent. The bill was ordered favorably reported to the House of Representatives by unanimous consent.

HEARINGS

For the purposes of clause 3(c)(6) of House rule XIII, the following hearing was used to develop or consider this measure: hearing by the Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs held on June 11, 2025.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Section 1. Agreement and transfers authorized, ratified and confirmed

Section 1 authorizes, ratifies, and confirms the settlement agreement by the SRMT, MCA, the State of New York, the Counties of Franklin and Saint Lawrence in New York, the Towns of Fort Covington and Bombay in New York, and the NYPA. Additionally, any land, right-of-way, or easement transfers noted in the relevant court cases are also authorized, ratified, and confirmed.

Section 2. Lands owned by Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe within Settlement Acquisition Areas

Section 2 recognizes any land owned or acquired by the SRMT, within the Settlement Acquisition Areas, as “Indian Country” as defined in section 1151(a) of title 18, United States Code.

COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding clause 2(b)(1) of rule X and clause 3(c)(1) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Natural Resources’ oversight findings and recommendations are reflected in the body of this report.

COMPLIANCE WITH HOUSE RULE XIII AND CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET ACT

1. *Cost of Legislation and the Congressional Budget Act.* Pursuant to clause 3(c)(2) of House rule XIII and section 308(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, and pursuant to clause 3(c)(3) of House rule XIII and section 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Committee has requested but not received from the Director of the Congressional Budget Office a budgetary analysis and a cost estimate of this bill.

2. *General Performance Goals and Objectives.* As required by clause 3(c)(4) of rule XIII, the general performance goal or objective of this bill is to authorize, ratify, and confirm the Agreement of

Settlement and Compromise to Resolve the Akwesasne Mohawk Land Claim in the State of New York, and for other purposes.

EARMARK STATEMENT

This bill does not contain any Congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits as defined under clause 9(e), 9(f), and 9(g) of rule XXI of the Rules of the House of Representatives.

UNFUNDED MANDATES REFORM ACT STATEMENT

An estimate of federal mandates prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office pursuant to section 423 of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act was not made available to the Committee in time for the filing of this report. The Chair of the Committee shall cause such estimate to be printed in the Congressional Record upon its receipt by the Committee, if such estimate is not publicly available on the Congressional Budget Office website.

EXISTING PROGRAMS

Directed Rule Making. This bill does not contain any directed rule makings.

Duplication of Existing Programs. This bill does not establish or reauthorize a program of the federal government known to be duplicative of another program. Such program was not included in any report from the Government Accountability Office to Congress pursuant to section 21 of Public Law 111–139 or identified in the most recent Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance published pursuant to the Federal Program Information Act (Public Law 95–220, as amended by Public Law 98–169) as relating to other programs.

APPLICABILITY TO LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The Committee finds that the legislation does not relate to the terms and conditions of employment or access to public services or accommodations within the meaning of section 102(b)(3) of the Congressional Accountability Act.

PREEMPTION OF STATE, LOCAL OR TRIBAL LAW

Any preemptive effect of this bill over state, local, or tribal law is intended to be consistent with the bill's purposes and text and the Supremacy Clause of Article VI of the U.S. Constitution.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

As ordered reported by the Committee on Natural Resources, H.R. 2916 would make no changes in existing law.