



Sponsor Statement

House Concurrent Resolution 1 Tribal Sovereignty Proclamation

HCR 1 declares the Legislature's support for measures to address persistent, devastating social strife in rural communities. It urges Governor Walker to acknowledge greater jurisdiction and accountability for local tribal authorities, in particular tribal courts.

In matters of tribal sovereignty and the delivery of justice at the local level, the state has too often missed opportunities to better partner with Alaska Native communities. Meanwhile, rates of alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic violence, and sexual assault that are among the highest in the U.S. have continued to shatter communities.

In tandem with House Joint Resolution 3—Congress: Alaska Native Tribal Sovereignty—HCR 1 marks a turning point, demonstrating the state's willingness to work together with Alaska Native tribes to strengthen ways to alleviate crime, social ills, and community distress.

Over the past 25 years, a multitude of state, federal, and joint commissions were created to address these issues. Time and again, they reached similar conclusions and recommendations, and time and again their recommendations were not implemented to the extent necessary to make significant impact.

HCR 1 endorses strengthening the authority, responsibility, and capacity of local tribal governments to administer public safety and justice in their communities. Experts agree that greater control, better defined jurisdiction, and increased accountability at the local level will lead to swifter response to violence and criminal activity, increased crime prevention, and increased rehabilitative, rather than punitive, sentencing models.

In time, more tribal authority and capacity for the local delivery of justice will also help lessen the burden on state law enforcement, court system, and corrections system resources.

For too many decades state policy has had too small an impact on the criminal and social problems in our rural communities. It is time to change our approach and support empowering Alaska Native tribes to make a difference.