

2026 -- S 2509

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

AN ACT

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- RECOGNITION OF NATIVE
AMERICAN TRIBES

Introduced By: Senators Quezada, Thompson, Kallman, Acosta, Valverde, Mack, Raptakis, Appollonio, Euer, and Famiglietti
Date Introduced: February 06, 2026

Referred To: Senate Special Legislation and Veterans Affairs

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 42 of the General Laws entitled "STATE AFFAIRS AND
2 GOVERNMENT" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

CHAPTER 169

RECOGNITION OF NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES

42-169-1. Petition for recognition.

6 A Native American tribe may petition the state for recognition by providing the house of
7 representatives with the following documentation:

10 (2) Evidence that a substantial portion of the group inhabits a specific area or lives in a
11 community viewed as American Indian and that its members are descendants of an Indian tribe
12 which historically inhabited a specific area:

13 (3) Evidence that the tribe has maintained tribal political authority or influence over its
14 members as an autonomous entity throughout history until the present:

15 (4) A copy of the tribe's governing document, including membership criteria, or, if it does
16 not have a formal governing document, a description of its membership criteria and governing
17 procedures:

(5) An official membership list, any available former lists, and evidence that current

1 members descend from a historic tribe or tribes that combined into a single autonomous political
2 entity;

3 (6) Evidence that the tribe consists mainly of people who are not members of an
4 acknowledged North American Indian tribe; and

5 (7) A statement that the tribe is not the subject of the congressional legislation that has
6 terminated or forbidden the federal trust relationship (pursuant to House Concurrent Resolution
7 108 (HCR 108) of 1953).

8 **42-169-2. Legislative power.**

9 The general assembly is granted the authority to forward a petition for state recognition to
10 the governor for enactment through legislation; provided, however, the general assembly has the
11 authority to impose restrictions on the following activities:

12 (1) Gaming licensure and/or permission to establish a casino;
13 (2) Creation of a state reservation or relinquishment of government land; and
14 (3) Approval for state sales tax-free economic development ventures.

15 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- RECOGNITION OF NATIVE
AMERICAN TRIBES

- 1 This act would provide a procedure for a Native American tribe to petition the state for
- 2 recognition.
- 3 This act would take effect upon passage.

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