

Snoqualmie Indian Tribe Voters Guide 2016 | Denny Heck Full Responses

Heck is running for U.S. House of Representatives, District 10

Do you have experience working with tribes?

Washington State is home to 29 federally-recognized tribes. The district I am privileged to represent, the 10th Congressional District of Washington, is home to four Tribes: the Puyallup Tribe, the Nisqually Indian Tribe, the Squaxin Island Tribe, and the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation. Working with the Tribes is both an honor and a duty.

If you were elected, how would you and your staff interact with tribes?

I'm fortunate to have great relationships with the Tribes in my district; my staff and I frequently meet with Tribal leadership both in Washington State and in Washington, D.C. I work closely with them on legislation aimed at enhancing opportunities in Indian Country, such as the Indian Trust Asset Reform Act that was recently signed into law by President Obama. We also worked on legislation that protects treaty rights, including the Bring the Ancient One Home Act and PUGET SOS Act. One of my proudest accomplishments in Congress was passing the Billy Frank Jr. Tell Your Story Act. This renamed the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge after a man who was my friend, and a tireless champion for treaty rights, Tribal sovereignty and salmon recovery.

What is your position on tribal sovereignty?

I am very supportive of tribal sovereignty and have worked to make sure the United States government recognizes all treaty rights.

Would you support the Tribe in its duty to protect sacred Snoqualmie Falls? If so, how?

I strongly believe we must protect our natural resources. As I mentioned, in the 113th Congress I introduced the PUGET SOS Act. This legislation would require the federal government to coordinate its role in Puget Sound recovery. Treaty rights are at risk and the federal government must uphold the treaties.

Do you support increasing funding to tribes for treaty-guaranteed services such as education and health care?

I have been a continuous supporter of increasing federal funding to the Indian Health Service, Indian Housing Block Grant program, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

What is your position on the collection of tax on tribal lands?

The same dire consequences of our under-investment in Indian Country--high levels of unemployment and poverty, and a lack of job opportunities--have prevented Tribes from establishing a broad tax base to fund essential Tribal government

functions like education, law enforcement, and healthcare. I believe the state and federal governments need to work with Tribes to develop tax strategies that increase economic growth in Indian Country. I will continue to work with Tribal- owned businesses and Tribal members so that they can support themselves and their communities. That's why I worked to pass the Indian Trust Asset Reform Act. This will authorize Tribes to determine how best to manage their own trust assets rather than having to follow federal standards that are out of date.

Would you support Tribal representation in the Federal level?

We need strong Tribal voices in Washington, D.C. to hold the federal government accountable to its treaty responsibilities. If Congress intends to set policies that enhance opportunities for Tribal members, then Tribes need a seat at the table.