

Snoqualmie Indian Tribe Voters Guide | Pramila Jayapal Full Responses

Jayapal is running for U.S. House of Representatives District 7

Do you have experience working with tribes?

As the ranking member of the Senate Natural Resources and Parks Committee, I have worked on many fishery issues that are important to our tribal communities. On the Healthcare Committee, I was a strong advocate for allowing for mid-level dental therapists so that we could address the growing crisis of lack of dental care that is plaguing many of our tribes. I also launched an initiative to proactively change the racist names of many of our state geographic landmarks—we found 22 landmarks offensively named “Squaw” as well as some named “Jim Crow” and “Negro” and “Coon.” My office has reached out to tribes across our state on this initiative to get your guidance in renaming some of these landmarks to honor our ancestors and first Nations people. I was honored to participate in Indian American Lobby Day, to co-sponsor the 2016 Paddle to Nisqually Resolution on the Senate floor, and to consistently support Native American issues on the floor including on addressing the opportunity gap in our schools. Most recently, I am proud to have supported the incredible activism of the Standing Rock Sioux in protesting the pipeline and protecting water rights and the earth. I am incredibly proud of the relationships I’ve built with the Indigenous Peoples’ community, and am honored to have earned the endorsement and support of Chairman Tim Ballew and the Lummi Indian Business Council, the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, and the Suquamish Tribe, as well as personal endorsements from Janeen Comenote (Quinalt), Deborah Parker (Tulalip), Claudia Kauffman (Nez Perce), and Chris Stearns (Gambling Commissioner).

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

I will always view tribal members and leaders as representatives of sovereign Indian nations. I believe our Native American communities know what is best for their people and their lands and I will always advocate for tribal sovereignty. In Congress, I will be a leader that our Native American communities can count on to support their self-reliance and interests related to treaty rights and sovereignty. I will also protect gaming rights for tribes which provide economic and employment opportunities that improve the lives of tribal members, and will work to expand educational opportunities. As the member of Congress serving Seattle, I will be representing a large urban Native American community. I will work with the Native American communities and leaders around the state to ensure our off-reservation Native peoples are included in policies that target minorities and underserved communities to make them more equitable and inclusive.

What is your position on tribal sovereignty?

Respecting tribal sovereignty is something I take very seriously. As a member of Congress I will swear to uphold the constitution, which includes tribal treaty rights and trust responsibilities of the federal government. I believe it is the moral and legal obligation of our government to protect the sovereignty of tribal governments.

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

I support and honor the tribe’s duty to preserve and protect the Snoqualmie Falls and the area around the Falls, and would stand against the continuous attempts at developing this sacred area for commercial use.

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

Yes, I fully support increasing funding to tribes for education and health care. We owe it to tribes to honor existing treaties and have a responsibility to fulfill the agreements our government made in exchange for the land we were given that was taken from them. I also support increased funding for the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, which doesn't do enough because it's been consistently underfunded by Congress.

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

I will honor the established federal law that states that sovereign tribal nations are exempt from paying local or state taxes on federal lands held in trust for tribes. I will always support tribal sovereignty and will stand firm against local and state government attempts to levy taxes on trust lands, or on property built on trust lands, regardless of who owns any buildings. I agree with the 2014 decision by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in the Great Wolf Lodge tax exemption case, which was a huge victory for tribal communities and set precedent to further protect the sovereignty of tribal nations.

Would you support tribal representation in the Federal level?

I will be a strong voice for tribal government at the federal level. The treaties our government has with Indian tribes are the law of the land and the trust responsibility will be one of my most important obligations. It is a moral and legal obligation that we uphold our trust responsibility.