

Transportation Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5503

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING THE NAME OF THE THAMES RIVER.

Vote Date: 3/10/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/27/2023

File No.: 179

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Transportation Committee

CO-SPONSORS

Rep. Anthony L. Nolan, 39th Dist.

Rep. Travis Simms, 140th Dist.

Sen. Catherine A. Osten 19th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill is in response to the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe advocating for the river's name to be restored to a historic name that better reflects its historical importance and relevance to the tribe. If passed this bill will aid in restoring the name of the Thames River to a former name that better reflects the rivers history, and cultural significance.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None Expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Daniel Menihan, Councilor of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation

Supports this bill, requesting the bills name be changed to "AN ACT RECLAIMING THE PEQUOT RIVER NAME." States that reclaiming the historic name of the river "recalls a period before our tribal lands were taken. The bodies of our brave lie in unmarked graves along the river's edge. Reclaiming its original name pays homage to our dead by acknowledging their presence along the river where they lived, thrived, and died."

Shirley Patrick Spiritual Leader of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation

Supports this bill, stating that they would like to see the name of the river changed to the "Pequot River." Going over the history of the tribe and river she talks about how the Pequots were massacred and their survivors became the first slaves in America. Pressing further she states that the Pequot River was renamed as the Thames River by the same colonists who she said sought to rid the Pequot Tribe of their land, culture, and language.

Rodney Butler, Chairman of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe

Supports this bill, reviews the history of the Pequot Tribe as well as the history of what he calls the Pequot river and advocates for the Thames River to have its name changed to the "Pequot River." Stating that when the Pequot Plantation was renamed New London and the Pequot River was renamed the Thames River. This piece of testimony includes 3 historical maps including the river from 1650, 1684, and 1761 respectively. Going further he states that nearly every major river in CT has retained its indigenous name.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Thomas Olsen

Opposes this bill stating there is no cost benefit, historical basis, or justification to rename the river to its pre-colonial name saying that the Thames River has held its current name for all 242 years of the existence of the United States.

Charlie Strickland, Chairman and Justice of the Mohegan Tribe House of Elders

Opposes changing the name of the Thames River to the "Pequot River" since it borders their reservation and burial grounds and states that the Mohegan's have reached out to the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation with the hope of finding a name for the river that both of Connecticut's federally recognized tribes can agree on.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Reported by: Nathan Vieira

Date: 3/16/2023