The Rev. Jonathan M. Barton
General Minister
Virginia Council of Churches

Testimony before the
United States House of Representatives
Committee on Resources
September 25, 2002

On behalf of
"Thomasina E. Jordan Indian Tribes of Virginia
Federal Recognition Act of 2001"
HR 2345

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H.R. 2345
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1 Chairman Hansen, members of the House Committee on Resources, my name is
2 Jonathan Barton and I am the General Minister for the Virginia Council of
3 Churches. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I
4 ask your permission to revise and extend my comments. I would also like to
5 express my appreciation to Congressman James Moran, Tim Aiken of his staff
6 and the other members of the Virginian Congressional delegation for all their
7 efforts. To the members of the six tribes gathered here today, you honor the
8 Virginia Council of Churches greatly by your invitation to stand with you as you
9 seek federal acknowledgment. We stand with you today in support of the
10 "Thomasina E. Jordan Indian Tribes of Virginia Federal Recognition Act of 2001"
11 (H.R. 2345). On behalf of the Council I would like to apologize for any acts of
12 injustice we may have been complicit or complacent in during the past and ask
13 your forgiveness.
14
15 The Virginia Council of Churches is the combined effort of 16 different
16 denominations in the Commonwealth of Virginia. A list of our member
17 denominations has been appended to my written comments. I have also
18 appended letters from various religious leaders in Virginia urging support for this
19 bill. Together we include one out of every five Virginians. During our fifty- eight-
20 year history we have always stood for fairness, justice and the dignity of all
21 peoples. We were one of the first integrated bodies in the Commonwealth and

22 have been for our entire history. We stand here today in faith, grounded in our
23 history and our values. The churches have had a relationship with these tribes
24 ever since our first European ancestors arrived and were welcomed by the
25 ancestors of these men and women here today. These tribes have developed
26 close ties to the Episcopal Church, the Baptist Church, the United Methodist
27 Church and the Assembly of God. Three of our leading religious executives are
28 Native American: The Rev. Dr. Wasena Wright, The Rt. Rev. Carol Joy
29 Gallagher, and The Rev. Dr. Cessar Scott.
30
31 Alexander Hamilton stated in 1775: "The sacred rights of mankind are not to be
32 rummaged for among old parchments, or musty records. They are written, as
33 with a sunbeam in the whole volume of human nature, by the hand of the divinity
34 itself; and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power." What we are
35 addressing today are the "sacred rights" of these six tribes. Our history has not
36 always been marked by peace and understanding. Treaties have been broken
37 and land has been taken. There is suspicion and mistrust on both sides. There is
38 perhaps, no deeper wound you can inflict on a person than to rob them of their
39 identity. To relegate them to a box marked other. To proclaim, as we have done
40 in Virginia during the time of Mr. Walter Plecker, State Registrar for the
41 Commonwealth, that you do not exist. Those who bear the legacy of their
42 forefathers, the first inhabitants of this great land, have suffered discrimination,

43 bigotry and injustice. In the past they have been prevented from employment and
44 attendance in public school. Churches sought to provide educational opportunity
45 during this period, which often meant having to go out of state to attend Indian
46 schools. Even as we prevented their attendance in our classrooms, we proudly
47 placed their names on our school buildings. We took their names and we placed
48 them on roads, towns and rivers. The discrimination they suffered not only
49 erased their identity it also robbed them of their voice. These tribes have proudly
50 served this nation even as this nation has turned it's back on them.
51
52 There has been much discussion regarding "gaming" during these proceedings. I
53 would like to state clearly that the Virginia Council of Churches is on record
54 opposing all forms of gaming and we are convinced that this is not relevant to our
55 testimony here today. The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988 covers this
56 legislation. These tribes here today humbly ask nothing more than to have their
57 identity restored, to be recognized for who they are. You can restore their identity
58 so that the healing of these deep wounds might finally be realized.
59
60 In 1983, the State of Virginia (Resolution No. 54) acknowledged the
61 Chickahominy, Eastern Division; the Upper Mattaponi; and the Rappahannock
62 and formally recognized them in a ceremony at the capital. The Nansemond tribe
63 was recognized in House Joint Resolution No. 205 in 1985 and the Monacan

tribe in 1989 (House Joint Resolution No. 390). In 1999 both chambers of Virginia's General Assembly agreed to House Joint Resolution 754 urging Congress to grant federal recognition to the Virginian tribes. Our legislature asked the state's delegation in Congress "to take all necessary steps forthwith to advance it." Senator George Allen in introducing the companion bill in the Senate stated: "It is important that we give Federal recognition to these proud Virginia tribes so that they cannot only be honored in the manner they deserve but also for the many benefits that federal recognition would provide. Members of federally recognized tribes, most importantly, can qualify for grants for higher education opportunities. There is absolutely no reason why American Indian Tribes in Virginia should not share in the same benefits that so many Indian tribes around the country enjoy."

God has called these people by name and has blessed them. God will recognize them as long as the sky is blue, even if it should turn gray. God will be there as long as the grass is green and when it turns brown. For as long as the water shall flow or on cold winter days freezes over, God will be there. It is long past time for the United States Congress to do the same.

Virginia Council of Churches

- African Methodist Episcopal Church
- African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
- Armenian Church in America
- Baptist General Convention
- Catholic Church(Roman)
  - Diocese of Richmond
  - Diocese of Arlington
- Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
  - Christian Churches in Virginia
- Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
- Church of the Brethren
  - Shenandoah District
  - Virlina District
- Episcopal Church
  - Diocese of Southern Virginia
  - Diocese of Southwestern Virginia
  - Diocese of Virginia
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
  - Metro Washington, DC Synod
  - Virginia Synod
- Greek Orthodox Church
  - Greek Orthodox Churches of Virginia
- Moravian Church in America
  - Southern Province
- Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
  - Abingdon Presbytery
  - Presbytery of Eastern Virginia
  - Presbytery of the James
  - National Capital Presbytery
  - Presbytery of the Peaks
  - Shenandoah Presbytery
- United Church of Christ
  - Potomac Association
  - Shenandoah Association
  - Eastern Virginia Association
- United Methodist Church
  - Holston Conference
  - Virginia Conference
- Baltimore Yearly Friends Meeting
- Observer Participants
  - Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENT
Required by House Rule XI, clause 2(g)
And Rules of the Committee on Resources

A. This part to be completed by all witnesses:

1. Name: **The Rev. Jonathan M. Barton**

2. Business Address: **1214 West Graham Road**
   Richmond, VA 23220

3. Business Phone Number: **(804) 321-3300 ext. 102**

4. Organization you are representing: **Virginia Council of Churches**

5. Any training or educational certificates, diplomas or degrees or other educational experiences which add to your qualifications to testify on or knowledge of the subject matter of the hearing:

6. Any professional licenses, certifications, or affiliations held which are relevant to your qualifications to testify on or knowledge of the subject matter of the hearing:

7. Any employment, occupation, ownership in a firm or business, or work-related experiences which relate to your qualifications to testify on or knowledge of the subject matter of the hearing: **General Minister Virginia Council of Churches**

8. Any offices, elected positions, or representational capacity held in the organization on whose behalf you are testifying; **General Minister Virginia Council of Churches**

B. To be completed by nongovernmental witnesses only:

1. Any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) which you have received since October 1, 1999, from the Department of the Interior, the source and the amount of each grant or contract: **None**

2. Any other information you wish to convey which might aid the members of the committee to better understand the context of your testimony: