



City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

In the City Council, February 21, 2019

Upon the Recommendation of: Councilor Alisa F. Klein
 Councilor Maureen T. Carney
 Councilor William H. Dwight

R-19.006

A RESOLUTION

IN SUPPORT OF CHANGING THE MASSACHUSETTS STATE FLAG AND SEAL

WHEREAS , the history of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is replete with instances of conflict between the European Colonists and the Native Nations of the region who first extended the hand of friendship to the Colonists on their shores in 1620 and helped them to survive starvation during the settlers' first winters; and

WHEREAS, members of the Native Nation for whom the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is named were ambushed and killed by Myles Standish, first commander of the Plymouth Colony, in April of 1623, barely two years after the Pilgrims arrived on their shores; and

WHEREAS, the Massachusetts State Flag and Seal depicts:

- a) a naked Colonial broadsword, modeled on the broadsword of Myles Standish, as it is being brandished above the head of a Native man whose proportions were taken from a Native skeleton kept in Winthrop and whose features were taken from a photograph of an Ojibwe chief not from Massachusetts but from Great Falls, Montana because the illustrator considered him to be a "fine specimen of an Indian;" and
- b) the Native man's bow that was modeled after a bow taken from a Native man shot and killed by a colonist in Sudbury in 1665, and his belt that is modeled after a belt worn by Metacomet, one of the Wampanoag leaders who resorted to a mutually destructive war in 1675-76 in defense of Native lands against Euro-Colonial encroachment; and

WHEREAS, members of Native Nations within the boundaries of Massachusetts were subjected by the colonists to inhumane and genocidal practices including the forced internment of thousands of members of Native Nations on Deer Island in Boston Harbor where they died by the hundreds of exposure in 1675; subsequent enslavement in Boston, Bermuda, and the Caribbean Islands; and the offering of bounties for the scalps of Native men, women, and children; and

WHEREAS, Native Nations in Massachusetts were kept in a state of serfdom and their members legally considered incompetent wards of the state until the nonviolent action of the so-called Mashpee Rebellion of 1833 led to the granting of Native self-rule by the Massachusetts legislature in 1834, as if the sovereign right of Native self-government was the Massachusetts legislature's to confer; and

WHEREAS, Native Americans were legally prohibited from even stepping foot into Boston from 1675 until 2004, when that law was finally repealed; and

WHEREAS, in the year 2020, it will be the 400th anniversary of the landing of the Euro-Colonists at Plymouth Plantation which gave rise to the long chain of genocidal wars against, and deliberate policies of cultural destruction of, Native Nations thus affording every citizen of MA a chance to reflect upon this history and work towards establishing a better relationship between the descendants of the Euro-Colonists and the Native Nations of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Native Americans have long suffered the many abuses of racism, the appropriation and misuse of their cultural practices and way of life, the appropriation and lampooning of their symbols and images for public schools and sports teams, and the diminution and pollution of their ancestral lands; and

WHEREAS, the City of Northampton, settled by Euro-colonists in 1654, recognizes that it was built upon the ancestral homelands and villages of the indigenous peoples of the Pocomtuck and Nipmuc Nations; and

WHEREAS, in its 2016 Resolution Recognizing the Second Monday of October as Indigenous Peoples' Day, the Northampton City Council acknowledged "the ongoing trauma and historical harms, acts of genocide, and violations of the human rights of Native American[s]" and stated its commitment to "uplift[ing] the indigenous roots and history of, and contributions to, our city and this country."

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of Northampton hereby adopts this resolution in support of H. 2776 and S. 1877 in the Massachusetts State Legislature, a "Resolve Providing for the Creation of a Special Commission Relative to the Seal and Motto of the Commonwealth¹," and expresses its strong support for Representative Lindsay Sabadosa's and Senator Jo Comerford's continued advocacy for their passage.

¹ Specifically, H. 2776 and S. 1877 calls for, among other things, "a special commission... [to be] established (1) for the purpose of investigating the features of the official seal and motto of the commonwealth including those which potentially have been unwittingly harmful to or misunderstood by the citizens of the commonwealth and (2) for the purpose of examining the seal and motto of the commonwealth to ensure that they faithfully reflect and embody the historic and contemporary commitments of the commonwealth to peace, justice, liberty and equality and to spreading the opportunities and advantages of education. The commission shall make recommendations regarding a revised or new design of the seal of the commonwealth and a revised or new motto of the commonwealth".

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council of Northampton strongly encourages the Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight to, after holding a public hearing on the Resolve, report it out favorably.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that if the legislation shall pass, the City Council of Northampton strongly encourages Governor Charles Baker to sign it and work with members of the General Court to ensure its enactment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Administrative Assistant to the City Council shall cause a copy of this resolution to be sent to MA State Senator Jo Comerford; MA State Representative Lindsay Sabadosa; all members of the MA Legislature's Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight, when they are appointed; U.S. Senators Elizabeth Warren and Edward J. Markey; U.S. Representative James McGovern; and Massachusetts Governor Charles Baker.

~ This resolution was developed through the initiative of, and with great assistance from, David Detmold, an organizer with Change the Massachusetts State Flag and Seal Campaign.

In City Council, February 21, 2019
Passed First Reading, on Roll Call Vote of 9 Yes, 0 No

Attest: Lana Krutzler, Clerk of Council

In City Council, March 7, 2019
Passed Second Reading, on Roll Call Vote of 9 Yes, 0 No

Attest: Lana Krutzler, Clerk of Council

Rules suspended, passed two readings and enrolled.
I hereby certify that the above Resolution passed the Northampton City Council on March 7, 2019

Attest: Lana Krutzler, Clerk of Council