



March 11, 2024

Representative Rick Hansen  
Chair, Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy  
10 State Office Building  
100 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard.  
St Paul, MN 55155

**Re: Support of HF 3783**

Dear Chair Hansen and members of the Committee:

Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light writes in support of House File 3783, a bill that would offer federally recognized Ojibwe bands a right of first refusal to purchase tax-forfeited land within their reservation boundaries.

The history of Minnesota is a history of indigenous land dispossession. Treaty by treaty, the United States took more and more tribal lands, almost always at below-market value. In some treaties, the Ojibwe bands only agreed to sell more of this land if part of the land was reserved (a “reservation”) for the bands’ people and common use. In 1889, Congress broke those promises, allotting individual parcels of reservation land to band members, and selling the “surplus” land that remained to non-Indians.

Even still, Minnesota’s breach of trust and treaty was not complete. Under federal law, members of federally recognized tribes need not pay property taxes on allotted land– the fractional retained remnants of a homeland that predated the U.S. Constitution. But Minnesota often taxed the land anyway, and took the land as forfeiture when the band member did not pay the illegal taxes. Parcel by parcel, Minnesota took even more of the reserved land that the United States had promised to the bands to induce their treaty consent.

Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light works is a statewide organization that works in partnership with multifaith communities and all Minnesotans to co-create a just and sustainable world. We cannot change the wrongs that came before us. But we can work together to repair the mistakes of our literal and figurative inheritance. By offering to resell on-reservation tax-forfeited land to the relevant Ojibwe Band before opening the sale to the general public, Minnesota would take a

small but meaningful step toward restoring treaty promises. We support HF 3783 because we want the state of Minnesota to engage in active repair of the harms it has caused.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Intermill". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter being a large, stylized "I".

Jessica Intermill  
Strategic Policy Consultant  
MN Interfaith Power & Light

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members

My name is Lynn Lindow and I am a Supervisor for Forest Township in Northeast Becker County within the White Earth Indian Reservation.

I would like to address HF 3783 regarding that the purchase of Tax-forfeited land be required to be offered to the tribal band before other parties.

Two concerns I have regarding this bill. The first is monies that come in to townships and counties that are used to maintain roads. Local governments receive PILT (payment in lieu of taxes) on these tax-forfeited lands. Many of the small townships in this area are largely dependent on this income to maintain the local access roads in order for landowners to access their property and for emergency vehicles to get to those in need. If these lands are purchased by the tribe, that PILT monies will be decreased. Tribal land is not taxed so local land owners will have to have their taxes raised in order to maintain roads.

The second concern is property access. Almost all access roads cross state and tax-forfeited land. All though these property owners have legal easements to access their property, will these access road remain open? These easements need to be durable and established by the state in insure access to private property. This bill does not guarantee these easements will be honored by the tribe?

HF 3783 has similar issues that HF 4304, transfer of state land to the White Earth tribe that has not come forward to this committee. SF 3480 was tabled last week to allow time to resolve these same issues before passing the bill.

Please vote No on HF 3783 so that these issues can be resolved.

Thank you.  
Lynn Lindow, Supervisor  
Forest Township, Becker County  
612-581-3176



# COUNTY OF BECKER

## County Administrator Human Resources

915 Lake Avenue, Detroit Lakes, MN 56501  
218-846-7309

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March 11, 2024

**Minnesota House of Representatives**  
Environment and Natural Resources Finance  
and Policy Committee  
430 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: House File 3783

Dear Committee Members:

Becker County opposes House File 3783 for the following reasons:

- Minnesota statutes on the disposal of tax forfeit real property is in the process of being reviewed and new statutes are being drafted, it is not known at this time how this proposal will match up with the new laws regarding the sale of tax forfeit lands by a local unit of government.
- This proposal would not allow previous owners from purchasing property that they lost to the tax forfeiture process if the land is located in an area impacted by this proposed legislation.
- Tax forfeit lands have been historically sold by public auction; Becker County opposes limiting the possible purchasers of tax forfeit land.
- Land that is purchased by Indian Bands may go tax exempt, keeping the properties from being placed on the tax rolls will adversely impact the distribution of the cost of government services in the form of property taxes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Carrie Smith".

Carrie Smith, SHRM-CP, MPA  
Human Resource Director  
Interim Becker County Administrator