

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 7541

To extend Federal recognition to the United Houma Nation, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 5, 2024

Mr. HIGGINS of Louisiana introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To extend Federal recognition to the United Houma Nation, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “United Houma Rec-
5 ognition Act of 2024”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

8 (1) INTERIM TRIBAL GOVERNMENT.—The term
9 “interim Tribal Government” means the Board of
10 Directors of the United Houma Nation, Inc.

1 (2) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
2 the Secretary of the Interior.

3 (3) TRIBAL CONSTITUTION.—The term “Tribal
4 constitution” means the Tribal constitution adopted
5 pursuant to section 4.

6 (4) TRIBAL MEMBER.—The term “Tribal mem-
7 ber” means—

8 (A) an individual who is an enrolled mem-
9 ber of the Tribe as of the date of the enactment
10 of this Act; and

11 (B) an individual who is placed on the
12 membership rolls of the Tribe in accordance
13 with this Act.

14 (5) TRIBE.—The term “Tribe” means the
15 United Houma Nation.

16 **SEC. 3. FEDERAL RECOGNITION.**

17 (a) IN GENERAL.—Federal recognition is extended to
18 the Tribe.

19 (b) APPLICABILITY OF LAWS.—All laws (including
20 regulations) of the United States of general applicability
21 to Indians or nations, Indian Tribes, or bands of Indians
22 (including the Act of June 18, 1934 (25 U.S.C. 5101 et
23 seq.)) that are not inconsistent with this Act shall be ap-
24 plicable to the Tribe and Tribal members.

25 (c) FEDERAL SERVICES AND BENEFITS.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Tribe and Tribal mem-
2 bers shall be eligible for all services and benefits pro-
3 vided by the Federal Government to federally recog-
4 nized Indian Tribes without regard to the existence
5 of a reservation for the Tribe.

6 (2) SERVICE AREA.—For purposes of delivery
7 of services and benefits to Tribal members, the serv-
8 ice area of the Tribe shall be considered to be the
9 following parishes in the State of Louisiana:

10 (A) St. Mary.

11 (B) Terrebonne.

12 (C) Lafourche.

13 (D) Jefferson.

14 (E) Plaquemines.

15 (F) St. Bernard.

16 **SEC. 4. MEMBERSHIP ROLL.**

17 (a) INITIAL ROLL.—As a condition of receiving rec-
18 ognition, services, and benefits pursuant to this Act, the
19 Tribe shall submit to the Secretary, by not later than 1
20 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, an mem-
21 bership roll consisting of the name of each individual en-
22 rolled as a Tribal member.

23 (b) DETERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP.—

24 (1) INITIAL ROLL.—The qualifications for in-
25 clusion on the membership roll submitted under sub-

1 section (a) shall be determined by the interim Tribal
2 Government in consultation with the Secretary.

3 (2) SUBSEQUENT MEMBERSHIP.—Upon adop-
4 tion under section 4, the Tribal constitution shall
5 govern membership in the Tribe.

6 (c) MAINTENANCE OF ROLL.—The Tribe shall main-
7 tain the membership roll.

8 **SEC. 5. TRIBAL CONSTITUTION.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 6 months after the
10 initial membership roll is submitted to the Secretary pur-
11 suant to section 3(a), the Secretary shall conduct, by se-
12 cret ballot, an election for the purpose of adopting a con-
13 stitution for the Tribe in accordance with the procedures
14 applicable to elections under section 16 of the Act of June
15 18, 1934 (25 U.S.C. 5123).

16 (b) NOTICE.—The Secretary shall provide at least 60
17 days notice to Tribal members with respect to the date
18 of the election held under subsection (a).

19 (c) ABSENTEE BALLOTS.—Absentee voting shall be
20 permitted with respect to the election under subsection (a)
21 regardless of voter residence.

22 **SEC. 6. GOVERNING BODY.**

23 (a) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subsection
24 (b), the governing body of the Tribe shall be elected in

1 accordance with the election procedures specified in the
2 Tribal constitution.

3 (b) INTERIM GOVERNMENT.—Until a governing body
4 is elected and takes office in accordance with election pro-
5 cedures specified in the Tribal constitution adopted under
6 section 5, the interim Tribal Government shall be the gov-
7 erning body of the Tribe.

8 **SEC. 7. RESERVATION OF THE TRIBE.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—Upon the request of the Tribe, the
10 Secretary shall take into trust for the benefit of the Tribe
11 any lands held in fee by the Tribe within the service area
12 described in section 3(c)(2).

13 (b) RESERVATION STATUS.—Any land taken into
14 trust for the benefit of the Tribe pursuant to this section
15 shall, upon the request of the Tribe, be considered part
16 of the reservation of the Tribe.

17 (c) GAMING.—The Tribe may not conduct gaming ac-
18 tivities as a matter of claimed inherent authority or under
19 the authority of any Federal law, including the Indian
20 Gaming Regulatory Act (25 U.S.C. 2701 et seq.) or under
21 any regulations thereunder promulgated by the Secretary
22 or the National Indian Gaming Commission.

1 **SEC. 8. REAFFIRMATION OF RIGHTS.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—Nothing in this Act diminishes
3 any right or privilege of the Tribe or any Tribal member
4 that existed before the date of the enactment of this Act.

5 (b) CLAIMS OF TRIBE.—Except as otherwise pro-
6 vided in this Act, nothing in this Act alters or affects any
7 legal or equitable claim of the Tribe to enforce any right
8 or privilege reserved by, or granted to, the Tribe that was
9 wrongfully denied to, or taken from, the Tribe before the
10 date of the enactment of this Act.

11 (c) HUNTING AND FISHING RIGHTS.—Nothing in
12 this Act expands, reduces, or affects in any manner any
13 hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering, or water rights of
14 the Tribe and Tribal members.

○