

**STATEMENT OF COACH KELVIN SAMPSON
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Enrolled member of the Lumbee Tribe, North Carolina**

**Before the Committee on Natural Resources
United States House of Representatives**

**Legislative hearing on H.R. 65, *“To provide for the acknowledgment of the Lumbee
Tribe of North Carolina, and for other purposes.”***

April 18, 2007

Good morning, Chairman Rahall and Congressman Young. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the committee this morning to testify in support of H.R. 65, a bill that would extend federal recognition to the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina – my tribe. I am the Head Basketball Coach at Indiana University. I am also an enrolled member of the Lumbee Tribe. And it is my experience as a tribal member, a member of a tribe not recognized by the United States that I'd like to address this morning.

Chairman Goins spoke about the 1956 Lumbee Act. This act left the Lumbee Tribe in a legal limbo – lacking the status of all other Indian tribes in Indian country and yet Indian nonetheless. The Lumbee people have suffered the same economic disadvantages of other Indian tribes – discrimination by the dominant society, poor social services and resources as compared to the dominant society, and limited opportunities. But the Lumbee people have not enjoyed the federal support that federally recognized tribes enjoy – support for our tribal government, advantages in attracting industry to the area, and special education opportunities. Nonetheless, many Lumbees have risen to prominence in their chosen fields and made major contributions to Indian country – as doctors, lawyers, judges, and yes, even major college basketball coaches.

I'd like to tell you my own story this morning...I want to tell you a story about a young boy growing up in Pembroke, North Carolina. My father held as many as four jobs every summer outside of his main occupation, which was school teacher, and coach, at one of the many all Indian High Schools in Robeson County. One of his summer jobs was a foreman of a "crew" at a tobacco market – I was part of his "crew". A memory that is etched in my mind forever was the names on the public restrooms. There were three. One was marked white, another was marked colored, and the last marked other. I was told to use the one marked other. Even though this had a profound effect on how I viewed others at the time, I did not allow this experience to define me, or my family. As I moved on in life, this served to motivate me, not deter me. Growing up in Pembroke, I always had great role models, including my mother and father, Ned and Eva Sampson, both Lumbees and college graduates. Good, or bad, we are all known for something. Looking back at my time living in Pembroke, I think the strength of the Lumbee people was our local college which started as Indian Normal College, then Pembroke State College/University to what it is presently known as UNC–Pembroke. Education became our foundation and our strength. Because of UNC-P being local and affordable, we had many of our people that could afford to go to college. Without UNC-Pembroke, we would not have as many college graduates.

Living my life as a Native American, Division I basketball coach, I have had the opportunity to influence, and affect, many lives. It has been my honor and pleasure to speak at many Native American education seminars, symposiums, and heritage events. When asked about my tribe, many times, the subject of Federal recognition comes up. I do think this creates a stigma – that somehow because we are not "recognized" or have "full benefit" that we are different than other tribes. The issue of acceptance has created a perception of not being completely "whole". I know there are a lot of highly successful

Lumbees that would love to be here today. Lumbee people have served and continue to serve other Indian tribes throughout the country as doctors, lawyers, judges, administrators, pharmacists, nurses, and educators. We have contributed our talents, time, and efforts because we believe in and support the advancement of all native peoples. Indian country knows well the contributions that Lumbee people have made in their tribal communities. We have worked with Indian people in national organizations such as the National Congress of American Indians, the National Council on Indian Education, and the National Indian Education Association. I am honored to speak on behalf of all these Lumbees today. We are a proud, and persistent, people. My family taught me how to work hard, go to school and earn the best education possible, understand the value of family and maybe, most importantly, give back to others. I have a camp scholarship program through my camps at Indiana University, for Native American kids, all over the country. This allows me the opportunity to not only help Lumbee kids but Native American kids all over the United States.

I think the two areas that the Lumbee people will benefit most from being federally recognized will be in medical benefits and education. Our people will now be able to buy much needed medicine, and will also allow more deserving Lumbee children to dream of furthering their education all over the United States.

You see, gentlemen, you not only have an opportunity to right a wrong, you more importantly have the power to create a legacy. I do not need your permission to call myself Native American but unfortunately in today's world I need your validation.

This is what we Lumbee Indians can accomplish. With federal recognition, the Lumbee Tribe would become a full player in Indian country, no longer second class Indians in the eyes of the federal government. As such, we would employ our substantial skills and abilities to help correct problems faced by Indian country and make significant contributions.

We ask for that opportunity...