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Seneca Nation Reacts to State of the State Address
Silence on issues of importance to Native Nations speaks volumes

ALLEGANY TERRITORY, SALAMANCA, N.Y. – The Seneca Nation has issued a reaction to the State of the State Address delivered this afternoon in Albany. Seneca Nation President Rickey Armstrong, Sr. stated the following:

“The past few weeks in Albany are a reminder about how Native Nations are regarded in the State capital.

The end of 2022 came with the Governor’s veto of a bill, passed by the Legislature in June, which would have rightfully protected unmarked graves and human remains from desecration. The veto came as a tremendous disappointment to the Seneca Nation and all Native Nations and communities.

There are countless Native burial sites throughout New York, dating back to before colonial invasion of our lands. Our ancestors deserve to be protected and our sacred sites treated with dignity and respect. While 47 other states have such measures in place, New York decided to remain on the sidelines. The state could have given an important and meaningful signal that, after decades of disregard, mistreatment and destruction aimed at our people, our land and our culture, the rights and dignity of Native people were finally garnering appropriate attention and respect. Instead, property and development interests were allowed to maintain their priority position over people – and not just Native people, but other cultural groups whose ancestors’ final resting place may be disturbed.

The veto of the Unmarked Burial Site Protection Act came on the heels of another veto rejecting a bill that would have rightfully protected the hunting and fishing rights Native Nations and our people bargained for

through our treaties with the United States. The violation of our treaties may be commonplace behavior in the halls of outside governments, but that doesn't make the practice any less egregious.

While the Legislature officially began its 2023 session last week, today is the day annually when all eyes turn to Albany. The priorities for the coming year were outlined and the aspirational goals identified, setting a framework for the months ahead. Sadly, the priorities of the Native Nations located within New York were nowhere to be found among the priorities articulated today. Not a single word of recognition was granted to the people who have been here since time immemorial – marginalized, again and still, in both word and deed.

The Seneca Nation, like all Native Nations within New York, has many issues specific to our people and our lands that we aim to address with the state in the coming year. Some of those issues have wide-reaching impacts far beyond our territories. But, there are issues that affect all Native people and communities – from the shores of Lake Erie to the shores of Long Island. We hope, that as 2023 continues, those issues are not met with the same silence that echoed from the Capitol today.”