



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Seneca Nation Denounces Hochul Veto  
of Unmarked Burial Site Protection Act**  
*Veto continues Albany's pattern of disrespect  
for rights of Native Nations and Native people*

ALLEGANY TERRITORY, SALAMANCA, N.Y. – The Seneca Nation is denouncing a recent veto by Governor Kathy Hochul of a bill aimed at protecting unmarked burial sites, and a continued pattern in Albany of turning a deaf ear to Native priorities.

At its first official meeting of 2023, the Seneca Nation Council unanimously approved a resolution formally voicing the Nation's opposition to the Governor's veto of the Unmarked Burial Site Protection Act on December 30, 2022.

"The importance of the Unmarked Burial Site Protection Act to Native people cannot be overstated, and its rejection by the Governor was an affront to Native Nations, our people and our ancestors," said Seneca Nation President Rickey Armstrong, Sr. "The Seneca people have lived, raised our families and been laid to rest in our ancestral lands from time immemorial. Because of our forced relocation from our expansive ancestral lands to our present-day territories over hundreds of years, the final resting places of all of our ancestors is likely unknowable. The Act would have finally given Native communities a true voice in honoring our moral and ethical obligation to protect those most sacred sites from destruction and desecration."

The Act would have required the "cessation of all ground disturbing activities upon the discovery of a burial ground, human remains or funerary objects" and would have further required a determination of whether the

remains were of Native American origin and, if so, the remains would have been returned to the Native Nation from which they likely originated.

The Act was passed by both the New York State Senate and Assembly in late May and early June of 2022. Governor Hochul's veto keeps New York as one of only a few states without protective measures in place.

"The Legislature acted to protect our sacred sites and to extend to Native Nations the dignity and respect we deserve. Every vote cast was in support of the bill. All that was needed was the Governor's signature," President Armstrong said. "Instead, New York decided to remain on the sidelines, allowing property and development interests to maintain their priority position over people. The Governor's decision demonstrates an utter disregard for the fundamental rights of Native Nations, Native people and all New Yorkers."

The Seneca Nation plans to submit a resolution further condemning Governor Hochul's veto to the National Congress of American Indians and the United South and Eastern Tribes for their consideration and support.

According to the Seneca Nation, Governor Hochul's veto is the latest action in a long pattern of disrespect in Albany for the rights of Native Nations and Native people.

"The continued blatant disregard for Native issues and priorities coming from New York's Executive Chamber is disturbing," President Armstrong continued. "For more than two centuries, our governments, our people and our priorities have been greeted with a deafening silence and contempt from New York governors. We see little hope for change based on recent actions."