

Sen. Agard: State of the Tribes address outlines shared vision for future of Wisconsin

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MADISON – Today, Chairman Robert VanZile of the Sokaogon Chippewa Community delivered the 19th annual State of the Tribes Address at the Wisconsin State Capitol. Chairman Robert VanZile focused on the shared values of the people living in Wisconsin. Senator Melissa Agard (D-Madison), Senate Democratic Leader, expressed her sincere gratitude to the tribal nations that came to Madison for this important event and released the following statement:

“It was an honor to join my colleagues in the Wisconsin State Legislature to welcome Wisconsin’s First Nations to Madison for the 19th annual State of the Tribes Address. We recognize the sovereign tribes as intergovernmental partners and acknowledge that the land the State Capitol occupies is the ancestral home of the Ho-Chunk Nation.

“Today, we celebrate the partnership that has been forged between Wisconsin’s local, state, and tribal governments, but we must first recognize and learn from our state’s troubled history—a history rooted in colonization and violence—to move forward with compassion and respect for our Indigenous communities.

Chairman Robert VanZile outlined the significant contributions Native American communities have made to the nation. Indigenous people have been steadfast in their service to and the defense of the United States for centuries. Native Americans serve in the United States’ Armed Forces at five times the national average and Native American women currently serve at much higher rates than other demographics, making up twenty percent of all Native American service members.

“We must lift up the history and contributions of Wisconsin’s Indigenous communities and work to improve the lives of those living here. From expanding access to affordable healthcare, mental health services, and substance use treatment to removing PFAs from our waterways and preserving our precious lands, the State Legislature must commit to protecting the well-being of our natural resources and the well-being of Wisconsinites.

“I share many of the same goals with Chairman Robert VanZile: addressing racial disparities, combating violence against Indigenous people, improving education outcomes, increasing access to affordable housing, investing in sustainable infrastructure, and more. I remain committed to the state’s ongoing relations with our tribal leaders and serving as a partner and an advocate in the State Legislature.