

Try a little tax rebellion

To the Editor:

The Declaration of Independence was a protest of unfair taxes. So this year's celebration of Independence Day is an appropriate time to declare that my family is withholding \$1,000 from our Aquinnah real estate tax bill to protest the failure of the town and the tribe to offset costs to the town that are attributable to the federal housing project on the tribal land.

Despite a lot of talk about "finding new revenue" we're yet again starting another fiscal year where the taxpayers are covering these costs. We are particularly concerned that, although the tribe signed an agreement to reimburse the town for their share of fire, police, ambulance and other public safety costs, they are still budgeted to pay only \$8,000 this year; less that two percent of our public safety costs. We're even more disturbed that the tribe has not reimbursed the town this small amount for past years and that about \$40,000 is way past due. There is no indication that the tribe intends to pay this money that it has long owed to the town.

This is no way for a tribal government with a \$5 million budget to treat a small town with a budget half that size, perhaps one-quarter of which is the direct result of tribal housing. There is no law preventing the tribe from paying their share. We demand that:

The town identifies the actual costs attributable to the federal housing project.

The town and the tribe continue their efforts to work together and find funds to offset the educational portion of these costs with state and federal funds.

The tribe pays the town each year for the balance of the educational costs that aren't covered by federal, state, or other funding.

The tribe pays its fair share of public safety costs and all past monies due.

Until that happens, we will continue to withhold a portion of our taxes each year. I hope you will too.

I know this is a serious civil disobedience, but the burden of paying these costs has been borne by Aquinnah taxpayers for too long. I think it's time to try a little tax rebellion. Our history has shown it's worked before.

Jonathan Kaye
Aquinnah & Middletown, R.I.