



## **ROBESON COUNTY** **Board of Commissioners**

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March 3, 2026

The Honorable Representative Rouzer  
2333 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 2015

RE: Letter of Support to Preserve Old Main

Honorable Representative Rouzer,

I am writing to you as Robeson County Manager, Vice Chair of the University of North Carolina System's Board of Governors, and as a citizen of the Lumbee Tribe. I enthusiastically endorse the University of North Carolina at Pembroke's (UNCP) request for earmark support to renovate and restore Old Main, a historic building that represents the history of access to education for American Indians in North Carolina and the nation. Old Main is a symbol of the Lumbee people's self-determination and achievement and a cultural and economic asset for Robeson County. By supporting this project, you will honor the legacy of the Lumbee and contribute to the development of our County and our region.

The university was established in 1887 as the Croatan Normal School, a state-sponsored teacher training institution for American Indians who did not have access to public education at the time. Old Main was built in 1923 as the first brick building on campus and it still stands. The building has survived many challenges, including old age, a fire, and numerous hurricanes, and it stands today as a testament to the resilience and perseverance of the Lumbee people.

Today, buildings attract thousands of visitors each year who learn about the rich heritage of our community. It hosts educational programs, workshops, and events that promote community engagement and foster intercultural dialogue and understanding.

Additionally, the building functions as an administrative and academic center for UNCP, housing various offices, classrooms, and facilities that support the university's mission.

It includes spaces for student services, faculty offices, and meeting rooms that facilitate the daily operations of the university and provide resources for both students and staff. Furthermore, the building serves as an integral part of UNCP, a comprehensive regional university that educates over 8,000 students from diverse backgrounds, offering quality education across multiple disciplines.

The entire exterior of the building needs renovation and restoration. The building's distinctive brickwork and columns are especially vulnerable and require urgent attention, which is why this work is being prioritized. Restoring Old Main will not only preserve an important cultural and historical site but also serve as an economic engine for Robeson County. The influx of visitors, students, and events generates significant revenue for local businesses and fosters economic development in the area.

I strongly support UNCP's efforts and respectfully encourage you to approve the necessary funding for this project. By doing so, you will recognize the importance of Old Main as a historic site that reflects the history of education for American Indians. You will also help preserve and promote a vital resource that benefits our County and beyond. Last year you helped secure one million dollars for this project and we are extremely grateful for this level of support. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kellie Hunt Blue".

Kellie Hunt Blue  
County Manager

March 3, 2026

The Honorable David Rouzer  
2333 Rayburn House Office  
Building, Washington, DC  
20515

Dear Representative Rouzer:

I am writing to express my strong support for the pending community project funding request for the renovation of Old Main, a project that is essential for preserving one of our region's most iconic and historically significant structures.

Located on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, Old Main is far more than a university building; it is an irreplaceable part of Robeson County's cultural identity and a cornerstone of our region's economic development. As both a local business owner and Chairman of the Pembroke Tourism Board, I witness firsthand the cultural, educational, and economic value that Old Main brings to our community.

Built in 1923 as the first brick structure on UNCP's campus, Old Main stands as the oldest building at the university and is proudly listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It houses the Museum of the Southeastern American Indian and the university's American Indian Heritage Center, reflecting the deep history of the Lumbee Tribe, which has more than 60,000 members, the majority of whom reside in Robeson County.

We are deeply appreciative of the \$1 million in funding that was championed and secured during last year's legislative session. That support marked a major step forward in preserving Old Main and demonstrated a meaningful commitment to cultural stewardship in our region. However, additional resources are still required to complete the exterior restoration. These remaining repairs are vital to ensuring the building's structural integrity, improving accessibility, and protecting its role as a cultural and economic anchor for Southeastern North Carolina.

Old Main continues to serve as a major tourism driver, attracting more than 15,000 visitors annually. Its influence extends across multiple cultural and economic initiatives, including the growth of regional heritage tourism, Lumbee tribal events, and emerging opportunities such as Lumber River ecotourism. Ensuring that the building remains safe, welcoming, and fully functional is essential to sustaining this economic momentum.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge strong consideration of UNC Pembroke's request for renovation funding. Supporting this project will help safeguard a historic landmark, strengthen regional tourism, and honor the cultural heritage that defines Robeson County.

Thank you for your thoughtful attention to this important priority and for your continued service to our state and region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Chavis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

James Chavis  
Owner/Manager of the Holiday Inn Express  
Pembroke, N.C.

# LUMBEE TRIBE OF NORTH CAROLINA

John L. Lowery | Lumbee Tribal Chairman



March 3, 2026

The Honorable Representative Rouzer  
2333 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, DC 20515  
RE: Letter of Support to Preserve Old Main

Honorable Representative Rouzer,

Thank you for your support and for assisting with our previous funding request for the restoration of Old Main. Your efforts helped secure \$1 million toward this important project, and we are truly grateful for your leadership and commitment to preserving this historic landmark. While this funding allowed us to begin critical work, significant resources are still needed to fully restore the exterior of Old Main, and we appreciate your continued support as we work to complete this effort.

I am writing to you as the chairman of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, the largest tribe east of the Mississippi River and the ninth largest in the nation. I offer my strongest support for the earmark request submitted by the University of North Carolina at Pembroke (UNCP) for the renovation and restoration of Old Main, the most historic and iconic building on campus.

Old Main is a symbol of the Lumbee people's deep appreciation for education, resilience, perseverance, and pride. It is the heart of UNCP, which was founded in 1887 as a normal school for the education of American Indians. Old Main was built in 1923 and since that time has been a place of learning, culture, and community for thousands of Lumbee students and alumni, and other Native and non-Native students. It has also witnessed the evolution of UNCP from a normal school to a state college to a regional university, reflecting the changing needs and aspirations of the Lumbee people and the diverse population of southeastern North Carolina.

Old Main is also a testament to the Lumbee people's determination to preserve their heritage and identity. In the early 1970s, when the university planned to demolish Old Main and build a new auditorium, the Lumbee community mobilized to save the building, collecting signatures, writing letters, and marching in protest. They saw Old Main as a historical monument to their past and a permanent part of their heritage. Their efforts paid off when the university decided to spare Old Main. However, in 1973, Old Main was gutted by a fire. The Lumbee community did not give up on their beloved building. They rallied again to raise funds and secure support from the state and federal government to restore Old Main. In 1976, Old Main was added to the National Register of Historic Places. In 1979, Old Main was restored and rededicated, highlighting its importance and inspiring pride among the Lumbee people and beyond.

Today, Old Main is a significant attraction for cultural tourism, inviting visitors to explore the history and achievements of the Lumbee and other Native peoples of the region. It is a focal point for educational, research, and outreach activities that promote the understanding and appreciation of American Indian heritage and issues. The building serves as a sacred space that connects the past, present, and future of the Lumbee people and UNCP.

**OFFICE OF THE LUMBEE TRIBAL CHAIRMAN**

6984 Highway 711 West | Pembroke, NC 28372 | 910.521.7861

# LUMBEE TRIBE OF NORTH CAROLINA

John L. Lowery | Lumbee Tribal Chairman



Old Main's location within the Lumbee tribal territory enhances its role in fostering economic development through tourism. The renovation of Old Main is not only a matter of aesthetics but also a way to honor the legacy and contributions of the Lumbee people and UNCP to the history of access to education in North Carolina and the nation. Enhancing the visibility and attractiveness of the exterior of Old Main as a cultural and educational resource is essential for drawing more visitors, which in turn supports local businesses and economic growth in the region.

I strongly encourage you to approve the earmark request submitted by UNCP for the renovation and restoration of Old Main. Thank you for your consideration and support of this important project. I hope you will join me and the Lumbee Tribe in celebrating and honoring the history and heritage of Old Main, UNCP, and the Lumbee people.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Lowery", written in a cursive style.

John L. Lowery  
Tribal Chairman

March 5, 2026

The Honorable Representative Rouzer  
2333 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Letter of Support to Preserve Old Main

Honorable Representative Rouzer,

I write today to ask your support for an earmark request for the renovation of the historic Old Main building, which is critically needed to preserve an important piece of Robeson County, North Carolina's history, and plays an invaluable economic development role in our region.

As the Chief Executive Officer of Lumbee Tribe Holdings, Inc., former Economic Development Director of Robeson County, an alumnus of UNC Pembroke (UNCP), and a Town Councilman, I can personally attest to the vital role that UNCP plays in creating the workforce of future generations. Cultivating talent in rural North Carolina has become increasingly important. The iconic Old Main building on the campus of UNCP presents an opportunity for cultural tourism and generates renewed interest in the many bachelor's and certification programs offered.


Old Main, serving as an iconic building on campus, acts as a crucial element in student recruitment. Its historical and cultural significance highlights the university's rich history, legacy, presence, and ongoing resilience. The preservation and renovation of Old Main will not only enhance the university's appeal but also demonstrate its commitment to maintaining a strong connection to its past while advancing into the future. This makes it a vital component of the university's strategy to attract and retain talented individuals who will contribute to the region's economic development.

The renovation of this historic building will foster additional interest from both students and the community. Workforce training and education are primary factors in determining locations for business recruitment and retention. UNC Pembroke plays a significant role in the economy of southeastern North Carolina, with its graduates representing the future workforce. The building's importance to the Lumbee Tribe uniquely contributes to tourism in Pembroke and attracts many visitors to the area.

That is why I respectfully ask for your careful consideration of UNCP's request for Old Main renovations, which will make the building more resilient to the weather and more attractive as a destination and gathering place to tourists, students, and staff, as well as preserve an important part of Pembroke's history.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this important priority for our region and all you do for our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kammie Jones", written in a cursive style.

**Channing Jones**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Lumbee Tribe Holdings, Inc.**