



# Change the Mascot!

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## **Momentum Builds as California Assembly Passes Anti-R-Word Bill and American Studies Association Calls for Name Change of D.C. NFL Team**

**Oneida Nation Homelands (May 5, 2015)** In a momentous week for the grassroots Change the Mascot campaign, the California Assembly yesterday passed legislation which would ban the R-word in the state's public schools. The legislation, which will now move onto the Senate, would make California the first state in the country with statewide legislation restricting the use of the dictionary-defined racial slur. Meanwhile, the American Studies Association (ASA), a leading scholarly organization dedicated to the study of U.S. history and culture, has demanded that the Washington NFL team drop its offensive R-word name and mascot.

The Change the Mascot campaign today praised the actions of both the California Assembly and the ASA. These latest actions in the strong and continued push for a change across the country clearly demonstrate that this issue is not going away, but is intensifying.

Change the Mascot leaders Jackie Pata, Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians, and Oneida Nation Representative Ray Halbritter said the following in response to the news:

“The California Assembly’s passage of this legislation to remove the R-word from its schools is an important step in the fight to eliminate this dictionary-defined racial slur from the American vernacular. We applaud the California Assembly for standing on the right side of history, and setting a positive example for the next generation.”

“We also thank the American Studies Association for their bold stance against the Washington NFL team’s use of this dictionary-defined slur. As the nation’s most prestigious academic and scholarly organizations continue calling for a change, the truth becomes even more clear: the R-word is offensive, demeaning and has no place being publicly promoted and celebrated in the year 2015.”

The California legislation, entitled The California Racial Mascots Act, would require all public schools in the state to phase out the R-word from their athletic teams by January 1, 2019. It would also prohibit schools from buying or distributing any newspapers, programs, yearbooks or other materials which bear the R-word.

The ASA’s call for a change resulted from a unanimous vote by the organization’s Executive Committee. In the statement announcing its position, the group said it “deplores the continuation [of] the harmful nickname and images associated with the team,” and also noted that it was joining “the American Anthropological Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Sociological Association, the Linguistic Society of America, the Organization of American Historians, and many native organizations, institutions, and individuals in calling for the Washington Redskins to immediately change the team’s racist logo and name.”

In addition to numerous scholarly organizations and elected officials from both parties, Change the Mascot has garnered support from a diverse coalition of Native American tribes, sports icons, leading journalists and news publications, civil and human rights organizations and religious leaders.

The grassroots campaign works to educate the public about the damaging effects on Native Americans arising from the continued use of the R-word. This civil and human rights movement has helped reshape the debate surrounding the Washington team’s name and brought the issue to the forefront of social consciousness.

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