



National
Congress of
American
Indians



Change the Mascot!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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California Makes Civil Rights History by Banning R-word Mascots Statewide in Public Schools

Oneida Nation Homelands – October 11, 2015: The state of California made civil rights history today when Governor Jerry Brown signed into law a bill that eliminates the dictionary-defined R-word slur as a mascot from all of the state's public schools. Assembly Bill 30 (AB 30) - The California Racial Mascots Act, will prohibit public schools from using the term R*dskins as a school or athletic team name, mascot, or nickname beginning January 1, 2017. California, the most populous state in the nation, is the first to pass legislation restricting the use of the epithet in its schools statewide.

The grassroots Change the Mascot campaign, which has been a strong supporter of the legislation, today praised California for its landmark stand against the R-word. Oneida Indian Nation Representative Ray Halbritter, who testified at a key hearing on the bill in the Senate Education Committee on June 17, and fellow Change the Mascot leader National Congress of American Indians Executive Director Jackie Pata, said in a joint statement:

“We applaud and extend our deepest gratitude to AB-30 author Assemblyman Luis Alejo, Governor Jerry Brown, and California's lawmakers for standing on the right side of history by bringing an end to the use of the demeaning and damaging R-word slur in the state's schools. They have set a shining example for other states across the country, and for the next generation, by demonstrating a commitment to the American ideals of inclusion and mutual respect.

“Their historic step to build a better future stands in stark contrast to the dogged inaction of Washington’s NFL team, which in the face of all the evidence that this term degrades and offends Native Americans, continues to defend and promote the slur for its own financial gain.

“The most populous state in the country has now taken a stand against the use of this insidious slur in its schools, and Change the Mascot expects more states to follow. This landmark legislation eliminating the R-word in California schools clearly demonstrates that this issue is not going away, and that opposition to the Washington team on this issue is only intensifying. The NFL should act immediately to press the team to change the name.”

All across the country, school boards, administrators and students themselves are also making the decision to give up this offensive term. Students at Cooperstown High School in New York voted to drop the R-word slur as their school’s nickname in 2013. They served as an inspiration to the Change the Mascot campaign and also led the way for many others who have taken steps to remove the R-word from their schools, including Northern Indiana’s Goshen Community School Board, the Lancaster Central School District of New York, the Oregon Board of Education, Madison (WI) School Board, Capitol Hill High School in Oklahoma, The Houston Independent School District and Conrad Schools of Science in Delaware.

Change the Mascot is a grassroots campaign that 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. Since its launch, Change the Mascot has garnered support from a diverse coalition of prominent advocates including elected officials from both parties, Native American tribes, sports icons, leading journalists and news publications, civil and human rights organizations and religious leaders.

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