



# The Senate of The State of Texas

SENATOR RODNEY ELLIS  
District 13

PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE  
1999 - 2000

December 2, 2013

Dr. Terry Grier  
Superintendent  
Houston Independent School District  
4400 West 18th Street  
Houston, TX 77092

Dear Dr. Grier:

Thank you for speaking with me last week. As a follow-up to our conversation, I write to request that the Houston Independent School District (HISD) put in place a process to change the name of the Lamar High School mascot and any other derogatory mascots at HISD schools.

I recently met with local Native American leaders, all of whom expressed sincere concern about the use of Lamar's inflammatory mascot name. This comes at the same time as recent press reports that have brought new attention to the mascot and a *Houston Chronicle* editorial in favor of changing the name. I echo their call to update the mascot to something that is a positive reflection of the Lamar community, not a racially-charged slur that groups all Native American cultures into one offensive word.

I know that the leadership of HISD and Lamar High School do not intend to offend anyone with the mascot's name, but, simply put, times change. The name is a relic of a shameful, discriminatory past. Dr. Martin Luther King said that "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." It does not bend on its own, though, and that occasionally requires reexamining words that were once considered acceptable in popular culture.

HISD is far from the first district to face this dilemma, so I ask you to examine best practices around the country on how other education leaders have approached similar situations. I believe it is in everyone's interest to have an open, inclusive dialogue as the process to change the mascot unfolds.

As a parent of children that graduated from and attend Lamar, I look forward to working with you to eliminate vestiges of racism from the mascot names of our community schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rodney Ellis".

Rodney Ellis

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CC: HISD Board of Education; Dr. James McSwain, Lamar High School Principal