



Change the Mascot!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Joel Barkin
Oneida Nation V.P. for Communications
(315) 361-8173
jbarkin@oneida-nation.org

As Landmark Legislation Banning R-Word Clears Key Committee in California, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan Calls Upon Washington NFL Team to Drop Offensive Mascot

The Change the Mascot Campaign today celebrated the California Senate Education Committee's approval of legislation that would remove the R-word slur from California's public schools and praised the Secretary's call for an end to the racist mascot

Oneida Nation Homelands (June 17, 2015) It has been a momentous 24 hours in the fight to end the R-word racial slur. Landmark legislation restricting the term's use in schools advanced in California, and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan called upon the Washington NFL team to change its offensive name.

This morning, the California Senate Education committee approved historic legislation that would eliminate the dictionary-defined racial slur as a mascot for all public schools statewide.

Introduced and authored by Assemblyman Luis Alejo, who also testified at the hearing on the bill that preceded the vote, Assembly Bill 30 - The California Racial Mascots Act, would make California the first state in the country with statewide legislation restricting the use of the dictionary-defined racial slur. State and national tribal leaders, student activists, and public

health professionals all appeared in support of the legislation at today's hearing, delivering impassioned and articulate testimony. These included Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation Tribal Secretary James Kinter, NCAI and Oneida Indian Nation Representative Ray Halbritter, noted clinical psychologist Dr. Michael Friedman and student activist Dahkota Kicking Bear Brown.

Just hours earlier, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan called for the Washington pro football team to change its name. In a pair of tweets, Duncan praised the Lancaster Central School District of New York "for challenging the status quo & saying Native American stereotypes are inappropriate in sports," and added: "It makes no sense to me why the Washington pro football team won't do the same and stop perpetuating racial stereotypes."

National Congress of American Indians Executive Director Jackie Pata and Oneida Indian Nation Representative Ray Halbritter, leaders of the grassroots Change the Mascot campaign, praised these latest developments:

"On behalf of the Change the Mascot Campaign, we applaud California's lawmakers for their leadership and demonstrating their commitment to respecting the rights of Native Americans. Assemblyman Alejo, who authored this bill, deserves special praise and he has certainly earned our deepest admiration and respect.

"We would also like express our sincere appreciation to Secretary Duncan for his courageous and just opposition to the use of the R-word racial slur and the continued stereotyping of Native Americans by sports teams. As Secretary Duncan noted, it is perplexing why the Washington NFL team refuses to stop denigrating people of color by clinging to a racist name and logo which is deeply offensive and has been scientifically proven to have negative impacts on Native Americans. Across the country there is a growing chorus of students who are stepping forward to say enough it enough when it comes to the usage of the offensive R-word slur. Washington team owner Dan Snyder in particular could learn a lot about basic decency, equality and respect from these young people.

"We hope that Snyder and the NFL will finally heed the continuing and growing calls for change, and decide to stand on the right side of history rather than insisting upon perpetuating racial stereotypes. This issue is not going away, and momentum in opposition to the epithet is only going to build."

The Lancaster Central School District Board is among a number of schools all across the country that are deciding to give up the offensive dictionary-defined slur. Within recent weeks, the Oregon Board of Education, Madison (WI) School Board, and Capitol Hill High School in Oklahoma all took action to remove the R-word racial slur from their schools. Conrad Schools of Science in Delaware and the Houston Independent School District also recently took steps to remove their schools' R-word mascots. And students at Cooperstown High School in New York helped jumpstart the Change the Mascot movement in 2013 when they voted to drop the R-word slur as their school's nickname.

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.

###

Follow us on Twitter:

[@ChangeDCMascot](#)

[@OneidaNatnNews](#)