



# Change the Mascot!

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## Change the Mascot Praises Colorado Governor and Lawmakers for Action to Address the Damaging Impact of Native Mascots

**Oneida Nation Homelands (Oct. 7, 2015)** Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper on Tuesday ordered executive action to create a commission that will study American Indian representations in the state's public schools and facilitate constructive dialogue with Native Americans on the topic. The Governor's actions achieve the same goal as legislation introduced earlier this year in Colorado by Reps. Joe Salazar and Jovan Melton seeking to review the use of American Indian mascots in Colorado schools.

The grassroots Change the Mascot campaign, which leads the nationwide effort to change the offensive name of the Washington NFL team, today is praising Colorado's governor and lawmakers.

"We applaud Governor Hickenlooper for taking action to address this serious civil rights issue facing our schools," said National Congress of American Indians Executive Director Jackie Pata and Oneida Indian Nation Representative Ray Halbritter, who lead Change the Mascot. "We thank Representatives Melton and Salazar for their pivotal role in bringing this vital issue to the fore in Colorado. It is especially heartening to see these lawmakers taking into account the perspective of Native Americans on why the mascotization of our culture is so critically damaging to our heritage and the future of all our children.

“Numerous academic and scientific studies have illustrated the devastating health and psychological effects that racist mascots have on Native American youth – diminishing their sense of what they can achieve and creating a racially hostile educational environment. Our children are the future, and we need to set a positive example for them of acceptance, equality and respect, especially in our schools all across the country.”

Today’s action comes on the heels of California’s Senate and Assembly recently passing Assembly Bill 30 (AB 30) - The California Racial Mascots Act, legislation which would eliminate the dictionary-defined R-word slur as a mascot from all of the state’s public schools. The bill is now waiting to be signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown.

Schools from all across the United States have elected to end their use of the derogatory R-word slur. This summer, Northern Indiana’s Goshen Community School Board, the Lancaster Central School District of New York, the Oregon Board of Education, Madison (WI) School Board and Capitol Hill High School in Oklahoma all acted to remove the R-word from their schools. The Houston Independent School District and Conrad Schools of Science in Delaware also took steps to change the schools’ R-word mascots. 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.

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