



# Change the Mascot!

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## Change the Mascot Praises Washington Arena Football Team and Owner Ted Leonsis for Selecting Unifying Team Name

**Oneida Nation Homelands (July 15, 2016)** The grassroots Change the Mascot campaign today is applauding the newly-introduced Washington Arena Football Team and its owner Ted Leonsis for selecting the unifying “Washington Valor” as the new team’s name.

Change the Mascot, the national leader in the movement to change the Washington NFL team’s offensive R-word name, noted the striking difference in the naming choices of the two D.C. franchises:

“It is incredibly inspiring to see a sports team in Washington select a name that – as it should – represents our nation and our capital city’s ideals in a unifying, positive way that all Americans can support,” said Change the Mascot leaders Jackie Pata, Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians, and Oneida Nation Representative Ray Halbritter.

“The inclusive approach of owner Ted Leonsis and the Washington Valor stands in stark contrast to the Washington NFL team which insists on slurring Native Americans, despite evidence of the

harm caused by their use of a dictionary-defined racial slur. There is no valor in continuing to employ a racist epithet that offends people of color, while absurdly claiming to honor them.

“By choosing a name that unites sports fans of all backgrounds with a positive, uplifting message, Leonsis is continuing the storied legacy of the late Abe Pollin.”

Abe Pollin was the former owner of the Washington Wizards basketball team who changed the name from the Bullets because he was concerned about the mascot’s association with violence. Leonsis’ Monumental Sports & Entertainment organization owns both the Washington Valor and the Washington Wizards.

Leonsis, whose Washington Valor will begin play in spring of 2017, said the team name “holds a mirror up to the community and fan base. It calls out the best in all of us to be brave and strong and celebrate our country but also creates an identity locally. I think our community in D.C. and Maryland and Virginia will see a lot of themselves in the name and they’ll be very, very proud of it.”

[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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