

➤ Hearing Records ... HR

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**WISCONSIN STATE  
LEGISLATURE COMMITTEE  
HEARING RECORDS**

**2009-10**

(session year)

**Assembly**

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

**Committee on  
Education**

**(AC-Ed)**

(FORM UPDATED: 06/28/2010)

**COMMITTEE NOTICES ...**

➤ Committee Reports ... CR

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➤ Executive Sessions ... ES

\*\*

➤ Public Hearings ... PH

\*\*

➤ Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

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**INFORMATION COLLECTED BY  
COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST  
PROPOSAL ...**

➤ Appointments ... Appt

\*\*

Name:

➤ Clearinghouse Rules ... CRule

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➤ Hearing Records ... HR (bills and resolutions)

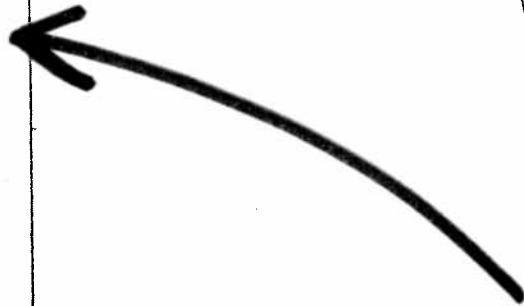
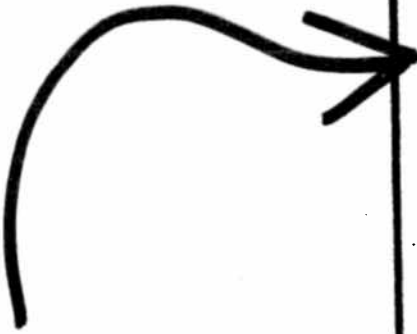
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➤ Miscellaneous ... Misc

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Public Hearing 3/17/09 - AB 358 & AB 119



Multiple Submissions

Prescot  
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My name is Jeff Ryan and I am from Prescott, Wisconsin. I would first like to thank the Committee for holding this public hearing and giving me and others an opportunity to comment on Assembly Bill 35 a proposed law designed to eliminate the use of race based mascots in public schools.

The state of Wisconsin contains the largest Native American population east of the Mississippi River. Our state's 11 federally recognized tribes have had an enormous impact on our state historically, politically, economically, and culturally. Over the past two decades the state of Wisconsin has begun to tap into what I would call one of our most prized resources - the indigenous communities found within our state. And today this committee is showing a willingness to have a conversation about one of the most pressing cultural respect issues facing this state - one regarding the use of race based mascots in our public schools.

I applaud the committee for giving both sides, I repeat both sides of this issue audience today. Unfortunately, I believe that for far too long the opinions of non-native majority have been given the greatest credence. I ask you this question. Does that make sense? Allowing non-native people who say “mascots honor native people” to control the argument is irresponsible.

Many public schools adopted these Native American mascots at a time when native people in this state and across the country were told their language was wrong, their religion was wrong, their dress was wrong, their entire life way was wrong. They were systematically taught to believe anything connected to “being Indian” was certainly not something to be proud of. Why then should it be surprising that native people kept silent when public schools and businesses began to “honor” native people in such culturally insensitive ways. After all, they were supposed to be ashamed and not proud of being Indian.

The fact is this. Native American groups have been speaking out against these racially insensitive mascots for over three decades. It's time we begin listening to those who are **directly** affected by the use of these mascots and the many organizations that believe once and for all that these race based mascots need to be eliminated. Please committee members and all members of the Wisconsin State Legislature support Assembly Bill 35. Thank you for your time.

~~Mr. Ryan - 2:41 - Summary -~~  
~~Travis - 2:20 - local control -~~  
~~Jordan - 2:20 - schools~~  
~~Zach S. - 3:30~~  
~~Taylor L - 2:20~~  
~~Leah K - 2:00~~

My name is Leah Kaufman. I am a senior at Prescott High School. I am here as a private citizen and do not represent the position of the Prescott School District. I would first like to thank the committee and the sponsors of this bill for holding this hearing.

I along with scores of native and non-native organizations believe that Indian Mascots are disrespectful to native people and should be eliminated from our public schools.

The negative imagery connected to these culturally insensitive mascots has significant negative psychological effects on American Indian children. Schools that use these race based mascots portray their ancestors in the same way schools use animal mascots. According to University of Arizona Professor Stephanie Fryberg, the continued exposure of these negative images to American Indian

Youth has dire results. Her extensive research showed Native American Youth experienced low self-esteem and a severe lack of pride in themselves and their ancestral cultural heritage.

Fryberg also found that stereotypical Indian imagery negatively affects native people who approve of mascots. The same is true for non-Indians.

I believe these mascots severely distort the cultural practices and traditions of native people of Wisconsin. The flippant use of eagle feathers and other traditional imagery on football helmets, the mockery of traditional dances and music at halftime, and the demeaning war whoop chants have created a grossly inaccurate portrayals of a culture that is so misrepresented. When this imagery is accepted as "factual" or "honorable" it only hardens cultural misunderstanding and unfortunately, institutionalized racism.



Education is the only way to rectify this issue. I firmly believe that if we really took time to educate themselves on the culture and life ways of native people they too would understand that this lack of knowledge has in fact created an atmosphere of disrespect.

Assembly Bill 35 is about one thing--cultural respect. So I urge the members of this committee and all members of the Wisconsin State Legislature to show this respect by passing Assembly Bill 35. Again, thank you for allowing me to share my views with you today.

I am Sarah Schanus. I am from Prescott, Wisconsin and a senior at Prescott High School. Today I am here as a private citizen to express my support for Assembly Bill 35, a proposed law asking for the elimination of race based mascots in our public schools.

Lack of knowledge is at the center of this issue. Apparently we are ignorant that the word honor has nothing to do with using race based mascots at high school sporting events.

Honor means: to have good respect or to be held in esteem. Allowing public schools to use race based mascots certainly does not constitute honor.

Native people are no strangers to double standards. Unlike all other citizens of this country, Native Americans were not allowed to practice their traditional religion until the late 1970's. It was also acceptable for citizens to dig up Indian burial mounds until 1990. Thank goodness laws have been

passed that guarantee religious freedom to native people and end the pillaging of Native American grave sites.

However, fans in the stands continue to mock, mimick, and make sport of native culture through the use of Indian mascots. The culturally insensitive tomahawk chop and war whoop chants still echo in gymnasiums in schools around our state. The culture of native people should not be demeaned or defamed. The cultural fabrications connected to using these mascots are blatantly hurtful and should be used for spectators amusement and enjoyment. <sup>not</sup>be

Less than 20 years ago parents of native children were forced to remove their children from schools due to intimidation and harassment as tribal members exercised federally guaranteed treaty rights in Northern Wisconsin. Native adults and children were bombarded with racial slurs and epithets continuously. In response the state of

Wisconsin took action passing Wisconsin Act 31 requiring schools to teach treaty rights and Indian sovereignty in our state's public schools. The Wisconsin State Assembly has another opportunity to continue its attempts to bring greater understanding about our neighbors - the native people of Wisconsin.

I and my friends have come here today asking that your help stop the use of race based mascots in our public schools. Honor means to have good respect or to be held in esteem. For me and others it is blatantly obvious there is no honor in race based mascots.

Here is the bottom line. This issue is all about cultural respect. I urge the members of this committee and all members of the Wisconsin State Legislature to show this respect by passing Assembly Bill 35. Thank you for your time.

My name is Taylor Lubich. I am a senior at Prescott High School. I am here today as a private citizen and my views do not reflect those of the Prescott School District. I would like to thank the committee and the sponsors of this bill for allowing me and other concerned citizens the opportunity to share our views regarding Assembly Bill 35 and for believing the using of race based mascots in our schools is well worth discussing.

I firmly believe that race based mascots are offensive and should be eliminated from Wisconsin's public schools.

Native Americans are the only, I repeat, the only racial minority in the United States whose names are used as sports team mascots.

Some may argue "the Fighting Irish" or "the Vikings" are therefore also offensive. The argument holds no merit.

Today, American Indians comprise a mere 2% of the country's population, while those of Irish heritage constitute the second largest subgroup in the United States. Today, Irish-Americans have not experienced the same discrimination and prejudice native people deal with everyday in contemporary society. As far as the Vikings are concerned, their involvement in North America was minimal and I am not aware of any indigenous Nordic populations marauding around our state pillaging and plundering Wisconsin towns and cities.

There also are some who say using animals as mascots are offensive. This laughable and ludicrous argument finds its way into many conversations and onto many newspaper message boards. On the other hand, if a group of eagles got together, held a press conference and said "We do not want to be used as sports team mascots" then I would be right there with them. But let's state the obvious. Animals have

not been the victims of discrimination, have not endured episodes of systematic cultural genocide in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, nor have their cries of protest been consistently ignored like those of American Indian people.

I say to you again there is no other racial minority group in the United States whose names as used as sports team mascots. What an ugly double standard.

Here is the bottom line. This issue is all about cultural respect. So I urge the members of this committee and all the members of the Wisconsin State Legislature to show this respect by passing Assembly Bill 35. Thank you for your time.

My name is Zach Simones and I am a junior at Prescott High School. I am here today acting as an individual and am in no way representing the opinion of the Prescott School District. I have come today to express my support for Assembly Bill 35 which would effectively eliminate the cartoon imagery, the culturally insensitive slogans, and inappropriate chanting and cheers connected to race based mascots. I feel this issue is very important because it deals with the hypocrisy that is rampant in our society--an acceptance of cultural ignorance that leads to nothing more than institutionalized racism. I compliment the members of this committee in having the courage to face this issue head on.

Many people consistently make the argument that when participating in sports events involving Native American mascots, they are doing so with honor and mean no disrespect or malicious intent. The sad fact of the matter is



that if groups of people share their vehement opposition to using such imagery and yet the practice continues they are knowingly being disrespectful and intolerant. When people engage in “cartoonish” behavior and display crude and culturally insensitive images while being totally unaware of its offensive nature, they are sadly, participating in institutionalized racism.

The only difference between this and other forms of race based discrimination is that the using Indian mascots has for some reason become socially acceptable.

Last month I organized a student demonstration that involved a number of young people from Prescott. We wore the shirts that I have on today. As expected, we were met with opposition from many. I received many e-mails claiming the mascots are not disrespectful, but were used to honor Native Americans

(share excerpts from some e-mails--people will not be identified)

In 1946 war crime trials were held in Nuremberg, Germany for those responsible for the murder of millions of people. Over 25 men were convicted and executed for Crimes Against Humanity. All of the men put to death were either responsible for directly, or indirectly murdering thousands of people in the name of the Nazis. All except one. A man named Julius Streicher. Streicher was a man who have never ordered anyone to their death or commanded others to do the same. He was in fact a publisher for a German newspaper that was used as a propaganda tool by the Third Reich. He was the man responsible for depicting Jews as cartoonish, crude, subhuman beings. When he was convicted of crimes against humanity the international court issued a statement saying that they were hanging him to set a

precedent, that no longer will people be depicted as less than human.

In closing I only ask that the members of this committee and all members of the state legislature do what countless organizations such as the NCAA, NAACP, National Council of American Indians, the Minnesota State Board of Education, The Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, and the Wisconsin Menomoneie Tribe of Indians have done.

Resolved the teach cultural respect. Here is the bottom line. It is all about cultural respect, and I urge the members of this committee and all members of the Wisconsin State Legislature to show this respect by passing Assembly Bill 35. Thank you for your time.

My name is Travis Cooper-Novak. I am a citizen of Prescott, Wisconsin and a member of the senior class at Prescott High School. I am here as a private citizen and my testimony is in no way the opinion of the Prescott School District. I believe Assembly Bill 35, a proposed law that would effectively eliminate the use of race based mascots in public schools is an issue of great relevance and I urge you to support this bill.

When it comes to this bill many have argued “What if the school and students want the mascot? Or “The school should be allowed to make the decision - its an issue of local control.” Or finally “What happened to the idea of majority rule.”

When considering these questions one must also consider others. Deciding whether or not to continue this imagery is not like voting for the homecoming queen. When you are

talking about race based imagery I would argue mob rule is not the answer. What many do not understand is that these images, these race based names, these halftime jigs that supposedly honor native people, are emotionally and psychologically demoralizing to native people.

By allowing schools with enormous non-Indian majorities to dictate "what is acceptable" has no merit. Using the same logic, a person could argue that forms of segregation would exist today in portions of the United States if left to "local control."

If they truly want to honor Native Americans then change the mascot. In fact they should do so enthusiastically. Schools that claim to be honoring Native Americans should be doing so with because they have native people's best interests at heart. And, if they truly do have their best interest in mind then the only logical, the only right thing, the only respectful

thing to do would be to stop the use of these race based mascots.

We live in a state with 11 federal recognized American Indian nations. I believe it is absurd to argue that we honor them by painting the word Indians across the walls of gymnasiums or slap an American Indian decal on the side of a football helmet.

If schools want to honor the wishes of scores of native and non-native organizations they would once and for all end the use of these mascots.

Here is the bottom line. This issue is about cultural respect. And I urge the members of this committee and all members of the Wisconsin State Legislature to show this respect by passing Assembly Bill 35. Thank you for your time.

Good morning. My name is Jordan Grabow and I am a senior at Prescott High School. Today I am here as a private citizen and my views do not reflect the views of my high school. I have become extremely interested in the use of Indian Mascots at public high schools in Wisconsin. And I congratulate this committee for holding this hearing on whether or not stereotypical images of Native Americans should be allowed in our schools.

This issue is important to me because there are several schools in my area that use race based mascots. The very type of mascots Assembly Bill 35 hopes to eliminate.

In many schools in Wisconsin mock war whoops and tomahawk chops can be seen and heard at football and basketball games. Fans paint their faces, wear feathers in their hair, and play music that does nothing but demean and mock the culture of native people.

Thankfully, there are many schools in the state of Wisconsin that have decided to change or completely eliminate their use of race based mascots. I would like to acknowledge and congratulate the high schools of Verona, Amery, Milton, Hudson, Medford, Rice Lake, and Seymour and many others that have decided there is no room for such culturally insensitive imagery in public schools today. It is time for the 38 schools in our state that still use race based mascots to follow their lead and eliminate or change their mascots.

We have 11 American Indian nations in our state. Why do so many choose to be so culturally ignorant when we have so many resources at our disposal. Wisconsin's native people are our neighbors. It's time for us to get to know them.

Here is the bottom line. This issue is all about cultural



respect. I urge the members of this committee and all members of the Wisconsin State Legislature to show this respect by passing Assembly Bill 35. Thank you for your time.