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(FORM UPDATED: 08/11/2010)

WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ... PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS

1997-98

(session year)

Senate

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on Education...

COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

- Committee Reports ... **CR**
- Executive Sessions ... **ES**
- Public Hearings ... **PH**

INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL

- Appointments ... **Appt** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Clearinghouse Rules ... **CRule** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Hearing Records ... bills and resolutions (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
 - (**ab** = Assembly Bill) (**ar** = Assembly Resolution) (**ajr** = Assembly Joint Resolution)
 - (**sb** = Senate Bill) (**sr** = Senate Resolution) (**sjr** = Senate Joint Resolution)
- Miscellaneous ... **Misc**

* Contents organized for archiving by: Stefanie Rose (LRB) (December 2012)

TESTIMONY FOR SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE HEARING OF SB341,
HELD ON JANUARY 28, 1998

Hello, my name is Kelly Verdon and I am the secretary of the freshman class at Menomonie High School. I was not around when this "incident" started. As a Menomonie middle school student, all I heard were rumors and a few facts.

I had no idea what was really happening. The knowledge I had about the issue was very slim.

I heard that we were getting rid of our logo because one person was mad, and thought that we were being disrespectful to the Native American culture. How wrong I was. I didn't know the student council as well as other people were actually studying this issue, and talking to Native Americans themselves.

With my lack of knowledge on the issue, I signed petitions even though I didn't know what they were about. I was angry at high school student council members for being narrow minded, even though the narrow-minded one was me.

When I entered the school year, I was a representative for the freshman class. This brought me together with the issue.

Hearing more and more about the issue made me think. Never in my life had I thought I was being disrespectful to the Native American culture, but I was.

I changed my mind when I went to a meeting at an area residence home. Two women who were both Native American were speaking on this issue. Immediately, I knew that what I was thinking before was wrong.

I started checking up on this issue. Using my mom, teachers advisors and other students as sources, I started seeing other issues that were involved.

This has separated our community, in my view, in three different parts. People who wanted it changed, people who didn't want it changed, and people who didn't care.

Some people wrote inaccurate views and I quote, "There's never been an incident on record where it's caused any racial problems... It's never been derogatory in any way. The school's done everything possible to honor the Indian logo and name,"

said an area resident of more than 50 years.

To the contrary, Katie Ackley signed a petition on record that she was not happy with the Indian logo. This is a racial problem. Also these are a few derogatory symbols that were on uniforms of our athletes.

Some things have made great strides in their state of mind, but using the media to keep your point of view is not appropriate. I understand that everyone has the freedom of speech and of the press which is greatly enforced. I understand the controversy needs to give in some way, or else our town will break, directly down the middle.

I love my school, and many people in it, but today, I am taking a stand.

There are more important things than an Indian logo, but when it brings disrespect to someone it is wrong in my eyes and in the Lord's.

I can only hope and pray that the open wounds will heal. Please, take into consideration what I have said. Thank you for hearing my point of view.

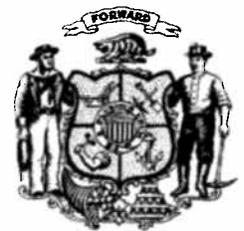
Sincerely,

Kelly Verdon

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kelly Verdon". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



TESTIMONY FOR SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE HEARINGS OF SB-341 HELD ON
JANUARY 28, 1998

Hello. My name is Joy Link. I'm a 17 year old Junior and Student Council Member at Menomonie High School. I've been involved in the effort to change the Indian mascot/logo/team nickname at MHS since August of 1995, the beginning of my freshman year.

The first time I talked to anyone about the possibility of changing was before the beginning of the school year when I was being shown around the school by two Senior Student Council members. They said they didn't really care what the mascot was, as long as they would graduate as Indians. At that time, I told them that I felt the same way, knowing that they only had one year of high school left and I had four.

The next time the mascot was mentioned was at the Student Council Fall Planning Retreat later in August. The Student Council was learning Conflict Resolution by Consensus, and needed a difficult topic to discuss. The mascot was perfect, because there were so many differing opinions represented by Student Council Members. We all had the opportunity to say how we felt about the issue. When it was my turn, I remember saying something to the effect of "It doesn't need to be changed. It's honoring the Indians. Look at the words surrounding the logo - honor, pride, dignity, and strength. How could anyone be offended by that?" By the end of the day, we had decided that this was an issue we wanted to learn more about, and made it a project for the year.

I kept an open mind throughout the year and listened to all of the information presented. By the end of the year, I could not believe that I had ever wanted to keep the mascot that I now saw as racist and stereotypical. I realized that I would never graduate as an Indian because all of my relatives are of European Ancestry. I was convinced that retaining a mascot like "Indians" was not honoring anybody, except maybe some of the MHS alumni who feel a deep connection to this mascot.

The school board listened to our proposal and approved a change of the mascot. For the duration of my sophomore year, the focus of the Student Council was on what the new mascot would be. We took suggestions from students and community members, narrowed them down using a list of criteria determined beforehand, and had the students vote on which name they liked the best. After the students chose the name, a contest was held to pick a logo. During this time, a recall election for three school board members was held, and those members were replaced. Among the first acts of the new school board was to reinstate the Indian mascot and put off all action until a community referendum could be held in April 1998.

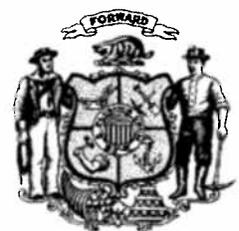
We had almost put the whole issue behind us, but community members keep dragging it out. There are probably other Wisconsin schools that would change their Indian logos but fear it would divide their community, their friendships, and their families like it has done in Menomonie.

I'm in favor of passing this bill because of this. Making a state law banning the use of Indian logos would be a huge step toward reuniting our community and putting the focus of the school board and faculty back on education. It would also help other schools replace their Indian logos without worrying about having an outcome like Menomonie has had.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joy Link". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J" and a distinct "L".



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



Testimony for Senate Education Committee Hearing of SB341 Held on January 28, 1998

As a teacher of twenty-eight years, I think it is noteworthy that through these years of experience I have studied this issue often and completely changed my opinion. Change is not easy for many people. When the change involves traditions to which people assign themselves, or by which they even define themselves, the change becomes exceedingly difficult.

Change seems to be at the heart of the issue of using Indian-related terms for mascots or logos. There was a time when less sensitivity governed our thinking about this and many other issues. Now, many people recognize that names may imply insensitivity, and stereotyping may imply intolerance.

As educators we have often learned and taught of the strength of diversity in our country. Yet that very diversity and lack of tolerance has led to many black marks. Many of us would like to take those ugly lessons from history and make our present times less scarred.

It is imperative that we teach respect of all cultures and groups of people. Therefore if members of a group feel that certain use of stereotypic logos or mascots is offensive, then we must listen. This need not be from a certain percentage of Native Americans any more than we should expect a majority of largely non-Native Americans to decide whether this use is right or wrong. Informed legislators must support the rights of ALL AMERICANS.

Again, this is not an issue that referenda should support or deny. Certainly the abolishment of slavery or the Civil Rights Amendment were not brought to the vote of citizens by the legislators. This is a Civil Rights issue and we are supporting bigotry and being intolerant of diversity if we allow use of logos/mascots with reference to Indians to continue.

I can assure you that there are dangerous uses today, in the past, and they will continue in the future. My own recent observations include: Locker

decorations at opposing schools on the day of an athletic contest saying "Scalp the Indians". I have read in state newspapers remarks showing negative stereotypes about Indians like "the Indians massacred their opponents" (when referring to the victories of the MHS football team). The list is lengthy but I have not documented the many incidents. I am ashamed to be labeled as a staff member, teacher, and coach of a school which shows this intolerance. I constantly remind others that 90% of the staff and 100% of the head coaches of Menomonie Senior High oppose the use of the Indian logo.

This issue has split our community and an upcoming referendum will resplit and fester the wound. The students of the new generation know what's right--only the tradition clinged to by some members of the community prevent the change.

For this reason, the legislative bodies of our state must make the use of logos and mascots implying Indian stereotypes illegal. This is without a doubt the only answer to a problem that will not go away.

Respectfully,



Dale Dahlke, Teacher , Menomonie Senior High School

regulations.

Chippewa tribal leaders have rejected this demand and accused the governor of negotiating in bad faith. Aside from the

*posing "substantial
Native American popu-
and game for subsistence*

What our readers are saying

Tribal people are offended by mascots

Dear Editor,

Once again the question of mascots is before us. Some tribal people do get truly offended by the disrespect and non-understanding displayed at some of the games especially when opponents wear a fake headdress and try to war-hoop.

It seems everyone has an opinion. But the people it offends are seldom asked why and how they feel about it and when they do, the response is, "What's the big deal?" Here's my suggestion:

Crazy Horse was a spiritual leader that opposed the use of alcohol so the beer with his name is offensive to tribal people. Let's not ban it or pull it off the market, instead, let's expand it and add Pope John Paul Whiskey and Allah's Ale. The alcoholic beverage market could be expanded to include the Holy Spirit and the Mormon Song half-racks.

The Sundance is a sacred tribal ceremony and while Plymouth has a line of cars called Sundance, maybe we could convince Ford or General Motors to be equally competitive. They should add a line of cars named after other sacred religious ceremonies. We wouldn't want to ignore the Jewish people or Catholics, so how about the Ford Bar Mitzvah? The GM Holy Communion? We do have a car named after the sacred Lakota symbol of the Thunderbird. Now let's manufacture the Mercury Crucifix, the Lincoln Menorah and the Ford Ankh.

Cherokee clothing is hot in today's market. We should include the Irish and have apparel designed for bar hopping. The snappy slogan could read 'the perfect clothing to drink up in and fall down on.' We could have a line of black designer clothing, its sales pitch could be 'the yo way clothing for shooting up or gunning down.' Let's design a line of JAP apparel, complete with a tiara - for the princess you think you are.

There is such a multitude of sports teams named after tribal people or have tribal logos that ethnic groups are being discriminated

against for not receiving the same honor.

In the name of honor, I propose the following changes: The New York Syracuse Chiefs could become the Syracuse WOPs with a mascot mob kingpin waving a machine gun. Let's call the New England Patriots the Boston WASP's. Their mascot, a large bee, could wear a pilgrim hat. The Atlanta Braves could become the Atlanta Jews. Instead of a tribal warrior waving a tomahawk we could have their mascot 'Rabbi' waving a fistful of money.

Let's name a baseball team the Los Angeles Hispanic's. A catchy slogan could be 'We steal home and everything else.' The Washington Redskins could become the Washington Asians with a slant-eyed, half-naked sumo wrestler running around swinging a samurai sword. Fans could do the samurai slash.

The Cleveland Indians could become the Cleveland Africans. The possibilities are endless. It's not fair to just offend and exploit tribal people - we need to get everyone in on the action.

Carol Craig (Yakama)

1002 S. 41st Ave

Yakima, Washington

Readers should write Clu

Dear Editor,

I was very pleased to read your article on the recent meeting of the Inter-Sessional Working Group on the UN draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In opposing the unconditional right of self-determination to indigenous peoples, the US delegation issued a statement on October 30 which read in part:

"From the first days of our republic, the United States has recognized American Indian Tribes as political entities with powers of self-government. In the domestic United States context, the term 'self-determination' means recognizing tribal self-government and autonomy over a broad

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Appeals