



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

January 5, 2021

Honorable Tony Evers
Governor of Wisconsin
115-East, State Capitol
P.O. Box 7863
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Governor Evers,

As chair of the 2020 Legislative Council's Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations, I write to you to ask that you consider including in your proposed 2021-2023 biennial budget a state grant program to assist school districts that choose to retire the use of American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities in an effort to offset potential costs. It is the understanding of the Special Committee this budget proposal was submitted by the Oneida Nation to the Department of Administration earlier this year.

I am making this request on the direction and appeal of the majority of the members of the Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations.

The Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations is a permanent committee of the Legislative Council that meets during even-numbered calendar years. The Special Committee is comprised of state legislators and federally recognized American Indian tribes and bands in this state or the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, and is directed "to study issues relating to American Indians the American Indian tribes and bands in this state and develop specific recommendations and legislative proposals relating to these issues." [s. 13.83 (3), Stats.]

At the October 19, 2020 and December 1, 2020 meetings of the Special Committee, the issue of Native American mascots and logos was discussed, specifically the creation of a state grant program.

Based on Special Committee discussion and overwhelming support for the budget concept by committee members, and the potential the special committee process will likely not be completed prior to the introduction of your proposed 2021-23 biennial budget, the committee elected to have a letter sent to you directly advocating the Special Committee's support.

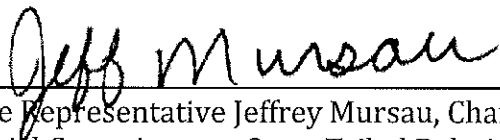
The state grant program would be created to assist those school districts that choose to retire the use of American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities with the associated costs of doing so, with up to a \$50,000 grant per district.

Established research shows the negative educational outcomes associated with the use of American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities—regardless of intent. According to the American Psychological Association, its continued use “establishes an unwelcome and often times hostile learning environment that affirms negative images and stereotypes that are promoted in mainstream society.” Further, it “is a form of discrimination against Indigenous Nations that can lead to negative relations between groups.”

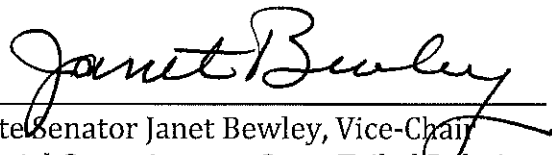
As an example, earlier this year, the National Football League team for Washington announced after 87 years the retirement of the term “Redskins” from their official name. Further, in 2018, after 71 years, the Major League Baseball team for the City of Cleveland retired the “Chief Wahoo” mascot that so many found racially and culturally offensive. Additionally, recent reports indicate that the term “Indians” will soon be retired as the Cleveland team’s official name.

Wisconsin over the past two decades has seen several school districts discontinue the use of Native American mascots and logos. There remain approximately 26 that continue the practice today. This proposed grant program is intended to remove any actual or perceived cost barriers to assist those schools wishing to achieve this goal.

Sincerely,



State Representative Jeffrey Mursau, Chair
Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations



State Senator Janet Bewley, Vice-Chair
Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations