



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P. O. Box 7882 Madison, WI 53707-7882

Office of Governor Scott Walker
115 East Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

November 12, 2013

Governor Walker,

We are writing you to formally request your veto of SB 317, the race-based mascot bill, passed by the Senate on November 5. Honor the top request in the first State of the Tribes address in 2005 before the entire state Legislature – abolish “once and for all” the use of Indian mascots by public schools. Eight years later, we join all 11 Wisconsin Tribes and countless Wisconsinites opposing reinstating race-based mascots or a process that will make elimination virtually impossible.

The current state law was created in good faith by Wisconsin Indian Tribal Leaders, educators, and legislators over a period of 20 years. They worked diligently through the governmental channels available in the Department of Education, as well as two joint legislative committees: the American Indian Studies Committee and the State-Tribal Relations Committee. Legislation was introduced nine times on behalf of the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council and Wisconsin Indian Education Association during those years in order to craft thoughtful policy that satisfied all parties. This bill eradicates that work and much of the goodwill created by those two decades of progress.

It is very difficult for our children to learn authentic information about Wisconsin's tribes and native people when schools have one-dimensional stereotypes of Indian people hanging on their walls and embedded in their gymnasium floors. Beyond the psychological damage that Native students endure from seeing their histories reduced to a headdress and a celebratory “tomahawk chop” during a football game, race-based mascots also hurt others. Extensive research has shown that the harm extends to other minority groups and indeed to all students, as all are learning to tolerate stereotyping along racial lines. Race-based mascots are an archaic form of symbolic racism that should have left our culture along with black-faced minstrel shows.

Education should be used to increase understanding of diversity, not divisiveness. Let's genuinely honor Native Americans by respecting their request to eliminate the use of mascots that they feel do not honor them or their culture.

Respectfully,


Senator Chris Larson


Senator Bob Jauch


Senator Tim Carpenter


Senator Timothy Cullen


Senator Jon Erpenbach


Senator Dave Hansen


Senator Nikiya Harris


Senator Julie Lassa

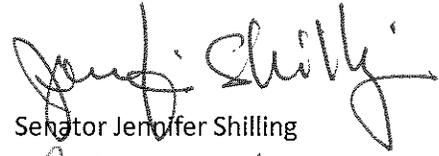

Senator John Lehman



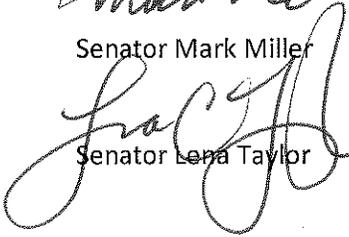
Senator Mark Miller



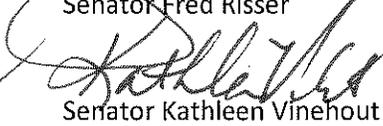
Senator Fred Risser



Senator Jennifer Shilling



Senator Lena Taylor



Senator Kathleen Vinehout



Senator Robert Wirch