

**Testimony of Becky Straus, Legislative Director
In Opposition to SB 215 and SB 501
Senate Committee on Education
March 28, 2013**

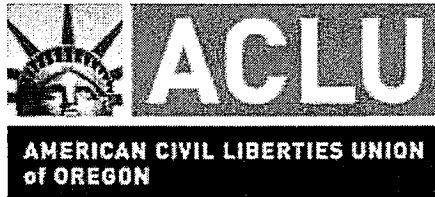
Chair Hass and Members of the Committee:

I apologize that I am unable to appear before you today to testify. I thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective on SB 215 and SB 501.

As the Oregon State Board of Education was deliberating on the issue of mascots, the ACLU contributed to the conversation with the attached letter. I hope you will consider our position and the issues we raise in the letter as you discuss whether and how to move forward with these two bills.

Again, apologies that I am unable to make myself available for questions during today's hearing, but welcome any comments or questions in the coming days.

Thank you.



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April 24, 2012

State Board of Education
255 Capitol Street NE
Salem, OR 97310-0203

RE: Proposed Ban on Indian Mascots, Imagery and Logos

Dear Board Members:

The ACLU of Oregon strongly urges your support of the proposed ban on Indian mascots, imagery and logos in Oregon's public schools. We share the views that have already been eloquently expressed by other organizations and individuals that stereotyping by our public institutions is damaging to all of our communities. Because public schools are often the leading institutions in local communities, and because local public schools establish community norms for their students, who are the leaders of tomorrow, school mascots based on stereotypes are especially damaging.

The ACLU of Oregon understands that there is a long tradition and history of particular schools having Indian mascots, and that these traditions and history have been cited as justification for continuing to permit this practice. We respectfully ask you to consider that many practices we now recognize as repugnant were once justified on the basis of tradition. A few examples are slavery, lynching and school segregation.

The historical mistreatment of Native Americans in Oregon should not be a cause for pride. In the 19th century, our government actively participated in the forced relocation and extermination of thousands of Native Americans. In the 20th century, many of the remaining tribes were terminated and there was a conscious effort to extinguish Native American cultural traditions and practices by forcing Native American children to leave their homes and attend boarding schools designed to help them "assimilate" into the majority culture.

Thankfully, most Oregonians now recognize that these practices, although they are a significant part of Oregon history, are blemishes on that history and should not be held up as positive examples for our youth today. And yet, that is one of the inevitable effects of allowing stereotypical views of Native Americans to flourish in some communities.

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For all of these reasons, the ACLU of Oregon believes that now is the time for our state to acknowledge these negative impacts on both our youth and our society as a whole. We urge you to act decisively and approve the proposed ban on Indian mascots, imagery and logos in Oregon's public schools.

Sincerely,

/S/

David Fidanque
Executive Director