

Jimmy L. Thompson  
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April 3, 2013

Oregon House of Representatives  
Attention: Education Committee  
State Capitol  
900 Court Street Northeast  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: House Hill 3397 Public Hearing

Dear Chairwoman Kotek and Honorable Committee Members:

Thank you for having a public hearing for House bill 3397, and thank you for the opportunity to speak. While I am in favor of House Bill 3397, I am only in favor of it in the absence of anything else. I feel Senate Bill 215-2 more adequately addresses my concerns over the Oregon Board of Education's ban on Native American mascots.

Merriam-Webster defines discrimination as, "The act, practice, or an instance of discriminating categorically rather than individually." That being the case, it would seem to me that HB 3397 IS discriminating, by segregating out just Native American mascots. The unfortunate reality is that we would not be in a position where we have to consider another act of discrimination had the Oregon School Board not discriminated when they imposed the ban.

I am a transplant to the Molalla area. We moved from Portland a little over 6 years ago. Over that time I have had the opportunity to coach a few youth sports teams, including as an assistant for my daughter's soccer team and more recently as head coach for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade youth basketball, and my most recent adventure as head coach for a 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> grade boys basketball team. I let my team choose their team name. In soccer, well before my daughter began her freshman term this year, they have consistently been the Indians. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders in basketball chose to be the Indians. The 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> grade boys chose to be the Ducks, but Indians was the runner up. This is a community identity. Mascots are meant to be a source of inspiration to the teams. If the name "Indians" can inspire even 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders, you have to ask yourself how deeply seeded the name is for the community. Given the fact that they were 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> graders, boys and girls, and of different races, and far more innocent and honest in their intentions than us politicians can ever hope to be, isn't it reasonable to accept that the reason for the name is to provide inspiration? If it is to provide an inspiration, how can it be derogatory, defamatory, discriminatory, or racist? And what of the Confederated Tribe of Siletz Indians, did someone forget to tell them that they were racist, against themselves?

I was at the hearing last week for Senate Bill 215-2. I was touched by the testimony of Chairman Reyn Leno of the Confederate Tribes of Grand Ronde. As I understood it, the Confederate Tribes of Grand Ronde, the group representing the Molalla Indians, want conversation. They believe mascots serve as a

source of inspiration. They want the Oregon Board of Education to butt-out. I have heard mention of "white privilege" in the conversations I have had over the issue. Is it more of an exercise of "white privilege" to tell the tribes that we, as in the legislature or the Oregon Board of Education, know what is best for them, or for us to honor their sovereignty, and to let them make the decision? Hasn't government telling the tribes what is best for them caused enough trouble already? I would like to strongly encourage this committee to place the decision of what is racist or derogatory for the many tribes into their hands, and encourage the Oregon Board of Education to spend their time figuring out how to fund the inclusion of Oregon's Native American Tribes in our history books.

I must say, the ban passed by the Board of Education was not all bad; it inspired many conversations that should have probably taken place a long time ago. Now we need to let those conversations continue.

Thank you for your time.

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J. Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Jimmy L. Thompson, Molalla Resident