

May 29, 2013

House Education Committee  
Sara Gelser, Chair  
Oregon House of Representatives  
900 Court Street Northeast  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Subject: Pass SB 215 Today

Dear Chairwoman Gelser and Honorable Committee Members:

While a huge number of people in Clackamas County think the State Board of Education's ban on words related to Native Americans is unfair, immoral and illegal, they also have said they're willing to work with tribal governments to reach agreement on a team name and mascot. At the same time, tribal government leaders have testified in other hearings this year that they would like to be allowed to work with local school communities on acceptable team names and mascots.

Let's analyze this. Both sides are willing to compromise. Both sides want to work together. Both sides aren't working together. Why not? Because the Board of Education's mascot ban drives a wedge between them. That's why the Oregon Senate passed SB 215 in early April on a vote of 24-4.

A broad mix of Democrats and Republicans in the Senate agreed that creating SB 215's compromise, and allowing tribal governments to decide for themselves what's offensive, was the best way to manage concerns over inappropriate portrayals of Native Americans. SB 215 doesn't eliminate the Board of Education's ban. The bill only modifies the ban to give schools an incentive to work with tribes, and to give tribes the discretion to decide what's appropriate, and what's not.

SB 215 is supported by a broad array of people and communities from all around Oregon: people of various races, religions, occupations and socioeconomic backgrounds; people who are students, parents, grandparents and teachers; people who are tribal leaders and people who are leaders in non-tribal communities.

Please allow tribes to decide what's offensive to them. Please support SB 215, and please vote it out of committee today with a recommendation to the full House to pass this bill.

Sincerely,



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The views expressed in this letter are solely those of the writer, and in no way represent the official positions or opinions of the Molalla River School District, its board or employees.