

RE: Oppose SB 215

Dear Oregon State Representatives:

I am writing today in opposition to Senate Bill 215. Words and images are powerful signals and help us navigate our "information" filled world. When those words and images are used to depict a whole race of people, in any setting, it can create unintended consequences. Our children deserve to attend school where no race of people is depicted in a negative way, or held up as a school symbol. Some argue there are positive images of Native peoples and why are these images inappropriate? It is simple, whenever we try to highlight a few images or few words to represent an entire race of people we are making generalizations about them. Our educational settings are not the place to plant seeds of race discrimination against anyone. All children must have an equal opportunity to learn factual information about our world, the peoples who inhabit our world.

As a Native American woman, I have faced discrimination throughout my life. Some of the discrimination was negative and some would say, positive, nonetheless I was being discriminated based on what I looked like, rather than on the quality of my character. My children have experienced discrimination in school; name-calling and physical altercations. There will always be those who choose to call people out, bully or pick a fight for whatever reason. Similarly there will always be those people who carry a romanticized view of native peoples. We must take responsibility to make sure that in our schools is a place for all children to get a quality education.

I understand why some people are in favor of mascots, even some Native people. I would explain it this way. When you grow up seeing very few examples of your culture and peoples' represented in important and meaningful ways, you will take anything, even images and words that may or may not describe you. This is how it was going to school in Oregon the 1960s, 1970s. I am a citizen of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and a citizen of the United States of America. I stand up for our Tribal sovereignty and believe the sovereignty of all Tribes is vital and should be protected. The mascot issue is not about one Tribe it is about a Nations of Tribes and how the misconceptions of the past continue to impact opportunities for the future.

As an Individual that is supportive of Indian People, the preservation of the rights they reserved through treaties, their civil rights, human rights and rights as citizens of the United States I am asking that you also respect these rights and uphold the Administrative Rule banning the use of race-based Native American names and images in Oregon Schools.

- 1) The continued use of Race-based Native American names and images may be a violation of the civil rights of American Indian people. <https://www.michigan.gov/mdcr/0,4613,7-138--294605--,00.html>
- 2) Research has shown that the continued use of Race-based mascots, names, symbols, images, and personalities has a negative effect on not only American Indians students but all students by:
  - a. Undermining the educational experiences of members of all communities-especially those who have had little or no contact with Indigenous peoples. The symbols, images and mascots teach non-Indian children that it's acceptable to participate in culturally abusive behavior and perpetuate inaccurate misconceptions about American Indian culture.
  - b. Establishes an unwelcome and often times hostile learning environment for American Indians students that affirms negative images/stereotypes that are promoted in mainstream society.
- 3) Native Students in the Classroom have Individual Civil Rights. According to the Oregon Department of Education, there are over 9,500 American Indian Alaska Native Students in Oregon Schools. They represent over 150 Tribes across the country, and they attend schools across the State. Native American students subject to race-based sports names experience **Educational Civil Rights Violations**, regardless of their tribal citizenship or location. **These violations will still occur if Tribes "negotiate" with districts, and will leave all American Indian Alaskan Native Students vulnerable.**

- 4) The National Congress of American Indians, founded in 1944, is the oldest, largest and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization serving Tribes. NCAI summarized their position stating,

*"In recent years, the NCAI, with the unanimous support of its member tribes, has adopted three resolutions calling for an end to the remaining use of disparaging American Indian nicknames and imagery..."*

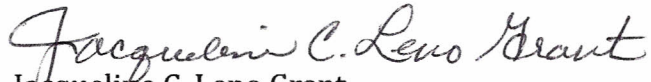
*"[T]he use of Native American mascots, logos and symbols depicting American Indian people are offensive to us, and such depictions are inaccurate, unauthentic representations of the rich diversity and complex history of the more than 560 Indian Tribes in the United States and perpetuate cultural and racial stereotypes[.]" The resolution further identifies the insidious manner in which the use of these names and images affect even how Native Americans see themselves: "[S]ports teams with 'Indian logos' influence the images we see, the clothing we wear, and the standards we set, thereby encouraging us to tolerate racism."*

[www.ncai.org](http://www.ncai.org)

In closing, I respect your willingness to tackle this tough and important issue for Oregon's schools and all our students.

Please support the protection of Oregon students and provide socially and psychologically safe learning environments for **all students** free of objectification, stereotypes that are damaging. **VOTE no on SB 215!**

Thank You,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jacqueline C. Leno Grant". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Jacqueline C. Leno Grant

62461 Fruitdale Lane

La Grande, OR 97850