

May 28, 2013

Dear Representatives,

I am writing to strongly oppose SB 215. SB 215 is an attempt to allow school districts and Tribes to find an acceptable level of racism – and there is NO acceptable level of racism in our 21st century public schools.

I am not a Native American. As a concerned Oregonian, I resent that my tax dollars support the Molalla River School District which has a racist stereotype “Indian” mascot. It is my observation that Molalla has no interest in the protection of civil rights for Native American students or in teaching the tragic history of Native Americans in our state and nation. The interest in Molalla is in preserving white majority privilege and the hope is that the “local” Tribe will rubber stamp the cartoon-like “Indian” mascot. That’s not acceptable. Districts like Molalla must be held accountable to protect the civil rights of all students by ending racist stereotype flashpoints like the “Molalla Indian” mascot.

Molalla has a growing Latino population – 15%+ - that exceeds the state average. Molalla has ongoing problems of bullying, racism and failure to honor diversity. The local school board has done nothing to solve these problems via diversity training that has been offered for free by the DOJ. Why would we allow a racist stereotype of a historically incorrect “Indian” mascot to exist in this district with all these problems? Rudy Crew is working to ensure that all students have an equal chance of academic success. How can anyone pretend that allowing any form of racist “Indian” mascots, which are proven to depress Native American student’s (our smallest minority) view of their potential for success as contemporary Americans, is acceptable?

The obvious intention of SB 215 is to void all the hard work and professional studies assembled over a number of years by our State Board of Education. All of those studies, growing by the year, show that “Indian” mascots are not only harmful to the educational success of Native American students, but are also harmful because they encourage all students to believe racial stereotyping is permissible. I trust those professional studies as the best way to guide Oregon’s schools to provide civil rights protections for all races.

The members of the Legislature are not experts in the educational or psychological needs of all students in Oregon and neither are Oregon’s Tribes. **No one Tribe should be allowed to approve a race based “Indian” mascot, since we have 566 Tribes in our nation and a child from any Tribe could attend any public school.** We need to provide stereotype free education for all students, regardless of their race. We don’t profile any other races as mascots and it is long overdue to end “Indian” mascots in Oregon’s public schools.

Sincerely,
Randy J. Hironimus
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Molalla Oregon