

**CONCURRENT RESOLUTION REGARDING NATIVE
AMERICAN MASCOTS AND EQUALITY IN PUBLIC
SCHOOLS**

2021 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Elizabeth Weight

Senate Sponsor: _____

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This resolution recognizes the harm done by using Native American mascots, encourages schools to retire those mascots, and encourages the State Board of Education and local education agencies to provide instruction in Native American culture and history.

Highlighted Provisions:

This resolution:

- ▶ recognizes that using Native American names, imagery, symbols, and regalia as school mascots wrongfully characterizes and causes harm to Native Americans;
- ▶ explains the harmful effects that using these mascots creates in the education and development of all students, including the contribution to high rates of school drop out and death by suicide among Native American youth;
- ▶ encourages school leaders to engage with Native American communities to develop processes for retiring these mascots; and
- ▶ encourages the State Board of Education and local education agencies to include instruction on the history, culture, and traditions of Native Americans in school curriculum.

Special Clauses:



28 None

29

30 *Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein:*

31 WHEREAS, the United States of America holds the values of democracy, equality, and
32 justice as fundamental cornerstones upon which to build society;

33 WHEREAS, all people are interconnected as one human family and should be treated
34 with dignity and respect, regardless of their racial and ethnic identity;

35 WHEREAS, Utah is the home of various cultural and racial groups, about 60,000 of
36 them American Indians and Alaska Natives;

37 WHEREAS, Utah is the ancestral home of eight tribes, each with a distinctive and rich
38 heritage of culture and traditions, and each with a sovereign government;

39 WHEREAS, Native Americans are a vital part of Utah's history, its present, and its
40 future;

41 WHEREAS, the tribal sovereignty of Native American tribes includes the right to make
42 or participate in decisions about their citizenry and identity;

43 WHEREAS, all students, including Native American students, deserve a respectful and
44 nurturing school environment that encourages positive educational, emotional, and social
45 development;

46 WHEREAS, all students have the right to receive an education free of discrimination
47 and exploitation, and, according to the United States Department of Education Office for Civil
48 Rights, racial harassment denies students their rights;

49 WHEREAS, Native American names, imagery, symbols, regalia, and characterizations
50 as school or team mascots symbolize a previous era when white Americans constructed
51 inaccurate portrayals of Native Americans to assert their dominance over Native Americans;

52 WHEREAS, such inaccurate portrayals and caricatures strip elements of Native
53 American culture of their sacred meaning and dignity;

54 WHEREAS, hundreds of tribal governments, organizations, and citizens have
55 encouraged schools and other sports teams to retire Native American mascots for the last 50
56 years, and while many schools and athletic teams have stopped using Native American
57 mascots, the tradition persists in some regions;

58 WHEREAS, the National Collegiate Athletic Association requires all participating

59 institutions of higher education to retire Native American mascots except in situations where
60 specific tribal names are used with the express permission from that tribe's legitimate
61 government, and with consensual terms of agreement open to renegotiation;

62 WHEREAS, it is widely recognized and respected that images of other historically
63 subordinated racial and ethnic minority groups are not used as mascots due to the obvious
64 racially discriminating and dehumanizing implications;

65 WHEREAS, despite the rights of a sovereign Native American nation to determine how
66 its identity and citizens are portrayed, Native American mascots were created without
67 permission from Native Americans, and the names and imagery used in these school mascots
68 are dehumanizing to Native Americans and perpetuate insulting stereotypes;

69 WHEREAS, because Native American mascots are among the few depictions of Native
70 Americans in American culture, and because those depictions are often savage in nature, they
71 send powerful and damaging messages to all students about the place of Native Americans in
72 their school, community, state, and country, especially if students have little contact with
73 Native Americans;

74 WHEREAS, in 2005 the American Psychological Association called for schools and
75 athletic organizations to immediately retire the use of Native American mascots because of the
76 damaging effects these mascots have on the self-esteem and heritage of Native American youth
77 and the misleading messages they send about all Native Americans;

78 WHEREAS, there is a growing body of research about how using Native American
79 school mascots creates a school environment that is deeply harmful to Native American
80 students' social and emotional health and development, and is directly related to the high
81 suicide rate of Native American youth and the high rate of violence against Native American
82 peoples;

83 WHEREAS, a 2017 study by the United States Department of Health and Human
84 Services found that suicide was the second leading cause of death for Native Americans aged
85 10 to 34, and the overall death rate for Native American teenage girls was three times higher
86 than the death rate for white teenage girls;

87 WHEREAS, Native American students in Utah are less likely to graduate from high
88 school than white students and have lower academic outcomes than many of their peers; and

89 WHEREAS, school leaders have an opportunity to thoughtfully engage with those who

90 have been harmed by Native American school mascots and create a process for removing and
91 replacing those mascots:

92 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah, the
93 Governor concurring therein, hereby encourage all schools and athletic teams with Native
94 American mascots -- including names, imagery, symbols, regalia, and characterizations -- to
95 engage with Native American communities to create their own processes to retire these
96 mascots out of respect for the cultural and spiritual traditions and practices of their Native
97 American neighbors.

98 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and Governor encourage the State
99 Board of Education and local education agencies (LEAs) to include instruction on the history
100 and culture of Native Americans in school curriculum, specifically the Native Americans who
101 were first on the land in each LEA's geographic region and who live there now.

102 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and Governor hereby encourage all
103 Utah citizens -- including non-Native American citizens -- to learn about the history and
104 heritage of Native Americans, including the history of indigenous peoples who live on and
105 have lived on Utah lands.