



Nicole Blodgett <nblodgett@panaschools.com>

Fwd: Capitol Watch: Time to Make Voice Heard on School Mascot Proposal

1 message

Jason Bauer <jbauer@panaschools.com>
To: Nicole Blodgett <nblodgett@panaschools.com>

Thu, Mar 5, 2020 at 1:52 PM

March Board Meeting

----- Forwarded message -----

From: IASA <iasa@iasaedu.org>
Date: Thu, Mar 5, 2020 at 1:45 PM
Subject: Capitol Watch: Time to Make Voice Heard on School Mascot Proposal
To: <jbauer@panaschools.com>



Time to Make Voice Heard on School Mascot Proposal

The time has come to reach out to your local legislators if you represent a district with a Native American mascot and want to preserve that heritage.

On Wednesday, [HB 4783](#), sponsored by Rep. Maurice West, D-Rockford, cleared the Elementary & Secondary Education: School Curriculum and Policies Committee by a vote of 13-8.

The legislation, however, will return to the committee after Rep. West indicated he plans to come back in April with an amendment — leaving time for continued negotiations and superintendents to make their voices heard.

We spoke to Rep. West today and he has agreed to send IASA the draft language of the amendment once it is written and have a conference call with superintendents. This will be a great opportunity to relay concerns superintendents may have directly to the bill sponsor. We will be sure to keep you informed when we see the draft language.

During Wednesday’s committee hearing, Rep. West provided some details on the framework of what the new proposal could look like.

Originally, his plan would have required schools to get written consent from a Native American tribe based within 500 miles of the school, as well as require schools to offer Native American cultural programs. Failure to comply with the new rules would mean ineligibility for sports playoff games.

Now, Rep. West wants to create a Native American Tribal Commission of Illinois, giving the Native American community all oversight of how they want their imagery to be represented in Illinois high schools rather than having lawmakers hold that authority.

The governor would appoint members from federally recognized tribes, and the commission would create its own rules and have the power to approve or deny schools on a case-by-case basis.

We have serious concerns about this proposal that we will share with Rep. West that go beyond stripping away local control.

First, we feel this proposal devalues a school district's history, which has always been a locally determined representation of the culture and community as determined by that community's ancestry and roots, which sometimes dates back more than 100 years to the days of settlers.

We also believe taxpayers, who understand a community's rich history and are primarily responsible for funding the operations of the school district, should have the strongest voice in determining how a school district should be represented.

Furthermore, there could be a significant cost to school districts if they are forced to change gym floors, uniforms and anything else with the existing mascot. According to Rep. West, if the commission denies a school from keeping a Native American mascot, he wants the school to have ample time to make changes that wouldn't hurt them financially.

Again, we encourage you to reach out to your local legislators if this is an issue that will impact your district. A list and contact information for members of the House can be found [here](#).

Stay tuned, and we will be sure to update you on the amendment when it becomes available.

Thanks for reading.

Sincerely,

Diane Hendren
Director of Governmental Relations
Illinois Association of School Administrators

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