

Good afternoon,

I am reaching out to you today to provide an update on the status of [HB 5617](#) (West-D; Rockford) that seeks to ban the use of Native American names, images, and objects in K12 school mascots. Brimfield CUSD #309 is a school district that might be impacted by the bill, should it see a successful push through the legislative session this year. For your reference, the full text of the bill can be found [here](#). We could potentially lose Indians as our mascot name. The district has been preparing for this legislation in recent years, and although it is a sensitive topic, we want the community to know that you have a voice as a proponent or opponent of this legislation.

For a bit of background, the bill is being sponsored by Representative Maurice West from Rockford. He previously filed [HB 4783](#) in the 101<sup>st</sup> General Assembly (2019), which would have limited the use of such mascots unless school districts put certain educational elements in place (express written consent for imagery use from a Native American tribe located within 500 miles of the district, an educational program on Native American culture at least once per year, a course of study outlining the contributions of Native Americans to society). These bills have been pushed for by a working group he has developed; the group has successfully pushed for a unit of instruction in Native American history, and is now pushing for a mascot ban. The group is made up of professors from universities across the state, as well as representatives from certain Native American groups.

The groups representing school management voiced a variety of concerns about the intent of the bill, as well as the actual language presented in the filed proposal. We are anticipating the proponents to regroup to discuss some potential amendment language. The groups representing school management reiterated some of the concerns we had with the bill, even with the amendment language that he has offered. We expressed a desire to continue working with him on the bill, and that we would prefer to continue those discussions into the summer months to ensure the legislation does not result in placing our school districts in no-win situations within their communities. We have been working closely with the Illinois Association of School Boards and do believe some version of this bill will move at some point in time, so we believe it is in the best interest of districts to negotiate with the sponsor and proponents.

At this time, the sponsor would like to call the bill for a vote in committee tomorrow at 2:00pm, but it remains unclear if the chair of the committee will allow that. If he is able to call the bill tomorrow, Rep West has committed to hold the bill on second reading and not move it any further along in the process until we are able to set aside some time to have more substantive discussions about the impact of the bill on local school districts.

If you feel inclined to slip in Opposition of the bill or be a Proponent of the bill this week, the link to do so is below:

[https://my.ilga.gov/WitnessSlip/Create/154009?committeeHearingId=20821&LegislationId=154009&LegislationDocumentId=192193&HCommittees4%2F9%2F2024-page=1&committeeid=0&hamber=H&nodays=7&\\_id=1712071143337](https://my.ilga.gov/WitnessSlip/Create/154009?committeeHearingId=20821&LegislationId=154009&LegislationDocumentId=192193&HCommittees4%2F9%2F2024-page=1&committeeid=0&hamber=H&nodays=7&_id=1712071143337)

Yours in education,

Chad Jones

Superintendent



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