



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

December 1, 2022

Robert J. Jones
Chancellor
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
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Champaign, IL 61820-5711

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From the National Congress of American Indians - Re: University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Mascot

Dear Chancellor Jones:

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) is the oldest, largest, and most representative organization in the United States serving the broad interests of Tribal Nations and peoples. It has helped lead Indian Country's consensus-driven movement to retire harmful Native "themed" mascots, imagery and branding from sports and popular culture for generations.

NCAI resolutions – passed via consensus among hundreds of member Tribal Nations – addressing the issue of inappropriate and stereotypical Native representation date back to 1950. Crucially, research in recent years documents the well-known harms that the monikers, images, and fan behaviors associated with Native "themed" mascots cause Native people, particularly Native youth.

NCAI is aware of the effort to formally replace the mascot at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign more than a decade after the harmful imagery was retired. Since the former mascot's retirement, members of the University of Illinois community have worked to find an inclusive and lasting representative for their school. NCAI is appreciative of your community's attention to this matter. When harmful Native "themed" mascots are retired but not replaced, harmful imagery persists as the community fails to come together around a new identity that is truly representative of them.

To that end, we understand a mascot replacement proposal has garnered significant support, including passing a campus-wide referendum and faculty vote. NCAI is supportive of the democratic process employed to select a replacement mascot for the University, and sees such a selection as a positive step forward for the University of Illinois community. Thus, **NCAI urges the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign administration, Chancellor, and Board of Trustees to take prompt and decisive action to replace and rebrand the University's mascot.**

Sincerely,

Larry Wright, Jr.
Executive Director
National Congress of American Indians