

ILLINOIS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DISTRICT OFFICE:
303 N. Main Street #110
ROCKFORD, IL 61101
(815) 987-7433



SPRINGFIELD OFFICE:
277-S STRATTON BUILDING
SPRINGFIELD, IL 62706
(217) 782-3167

MAURICE A. WEST II
ASSISTANT MAJORITY LEADER
STATE REPRESENTATIVE | 67TH DISTRICT

May 2, 2025

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in support of efforts to bring a new mascot, the Kingfisher, to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Moving away from a harmful past and towards a more inclusive future is important not only for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign but for our state as a whole.

I have been a devoted advocate and sponsor of legislation to address detrimental and offensive Native American imagery in our K-12 schools. I recognize that the University of Illinois has now gone 18 years without an official college mascot, but a lack of a replacement continues to allow old stereotypical imagery to survive and flourish. 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. This imagery has such detrimental mental health effects on native and non-native students that the American Psychological Association called for their removal 20 years ago (<https://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/indian-mascots>) and Native Americans from across our state have banded together to continue the push to remove them today.

It is my understanding that the Belted Kingfisher has been favorably voted for through both a campus-wide referendum and votes of the University Faculty Senate. The adoption of this mascot has the opportunity to bring together the university community and embrace a future that reflects the university's values of inclusivity, respect, and progress. I recognize and commend the sustained efforts of students, alumni, faculty and staff at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign to address the longstanding absence of a mascot at the university and the vacuum that has allowed harmful stereotypes of the past to remain relevant. Their work represents a positive and inclusive step forward for the campus community and the broader Illinois public.

I join native people and native organizations from across our state and beyond, who support moving away from the harmful and offensive mascots of our past and towards a more inclusive future. I strongly encourage both current and incoming university leadership to honor this moment for our state, and the work of its students and faculty by completing the transition toward a new, unifying mascot for the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

With kind regards to you and the community members we serve, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Maurice A. West II".

Maurice A. West II
Assistant Majority Leader
State Representative | 67th District