

THE WASHINGTON REDSKINS

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Bruce Allen
President

May 23, 2014

The Honorable Senator Harry Reid
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

RE: The Truth about the Redskins' Name and Logo

Dear Senator Reid:

In your recent letter to Commissioner Goodell, you correctly noted that: *“Professional sports have tremendous power to influence American society and strengthen our communities.”* Nowhere is that more true than in the Washington area. I hope you will attend one of our home games, where you would witness first-hand that the Washington Redskins are a positive, unifying force for our community in a city and region that is divided on so many levels.

After reading your May 21, 2014 letter to the *New York Times* and Commissioner Goodell, I believe that you may not have been provided all of the pertinent facts and true history of the Washington Redskins. The Washington Redskins are one of the NFL's flagship franchises. We have played in 11 NFL Championship games and have won five World Championships. With over 81 years of tradition created by thousands of alumni and millions of fans, the Redskins team name continues to carry a deep and purposeful meaning. Please allow me to offer a few important facts:

■ **The term Redskins originated as a Native American expression of solidarity:**

- More than a decade ago one of the foremost scholars of Native American languages, Smithsonian Institution senior linguist Ives Goddard, spent seven months researching the subject and concluded that the word “redskin” originated as a Native American expression of solidarity by multi-tribal delegations that traveled to Washington to negotiate Native American national policies. In *his* words: “The actual origin of the word (redskin) is entirely benign and reflects more positive aspects of relations between

Indians and whites”.¹ Our use of “Redskins” as the name of our football team for more than 81 years has always been respectful of and shown reverence toward the proud legacy and traditions of Native Americans.

■ **Our logo was designed by Native Americans:**

- In 1971, while my father was head coach, our current logo was designed and approved by Native American leaders. One such leader was Walter “Blackie” Wetzel, a former President of the National Congress of American Indians and Chairman of the Blackfeet Nation. Mr. Wetzel worked closely with President John F. Kennedy in the national movement for civil rights. Mr. Wetzel’s son Don wrote just two months ago: **“It needs to be said that an Indian from the state of Montana created that (Redskins) Logo, and did it the right way. It represents the Red Nation and it’s something to be proud of.”**²

■ **An overwhelming majority of Native Americans do not find the name offensive.**

- The highly respected Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania surveyed Native Americans nationally and reported that an overwhelming 90% of respondents said the name was **not offensive**.³ More importantly, Native Americans continue to embrace and use the name and logo. Many schools on Native American reservations proudly use the Redskins’ name and logo (see photo below from Red Mesa High School located in Teec Nos Pos, Arizona on the Navajo Reservation).



¹ Ives Goddard, 'I AM A RED-SKIN': THE ADOPTION OF A NATIVE-AMERICAN EXPRESSION (1769-1826), *European Review of Native American Studies* 19:2 (2005), available at <http://anthropology.si.edu/goddard/>.

² Mansch, Scott. “Don Wetzel: Don’t Call the Redskins Name Offensive.” *Great Falls Tribune* 19 Feb. 2014, <http://ux.greatfallstribune.com/story/news/2014/02/16/don-wetzel-dont-call-redskins-logo-offensive/5528647/>.

³ National Annenberg Election Survey, *Most Indians Say Name of Washington “Redskins” Is Acceptable While 9Percent Call It Offensive, Annenberg Data Show*, available at http://cdn.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2004_03_redskins_09-24_pr2.pdf (Sep. 24, 2004).

Our own travels to reservations in over 20 states confirm that there is strong support for the Redskins team name. On every occasion, we were warmly received by tribal leaders and members alike, and it is those personal visits that reaffirmed for us what Native Americans need is genuine support and to be provided with opportunities, not diversionary discussions about the name of a football team.

■ **The vast majority of Americans are in favor of keeping the team name.**

- In 2014, the Associated Press conducted a national survey confirming 83% of Americans said they are in favor of keeping the Washington Redskins name.⁴

Think about these facts...what policy or issue generates 83% to 90% support in this era of negativity and division?

Senator, rest assured we will continue to provide the support that people in the Washington area and others across the nation have come to expect from us. Whether through Redskins Read, Play 60, or Coaches in the Classroom, we remain committed to making a genuine, lasting difference in our community.

This includes making a difference for Native Americans through our **Washington Redskins Original Americans Foundation**. It is our mission to help tackle the troubling realities facing so many tribes across our country, by providing resources and genuine opportunities to those in need. Since the foundation was established just 60 days ago, it has already initiated over 40 projects across the country, which includes the distribution of over one thousand tablet computers for Native American students, as well as over a dozen vehicles that will be used for various health and community purposes.

We hope you will join us; Native Americans deserve our support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bruce Allen', written over a horizontal line.

Bruce Allen
President

⁴ The AP-GfK Poll, AP.ORG, http://ap-gkfpoll.com/main/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/AP-GfK-January-2014-Poll-POSTED-Final_NFL.pdf (last updated January 2014).