

STATE OF COLORADO

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

136 State Capitol
Denver, Colorado 80203
Phone (303) 866-2471
Fax (303) 866-2003



John W. Hickenlooper
Governor

B 2015 006

EXECUTIVE ORDER

Creating the Commission to Study American Indian Representations in Public Schools

Pursuant to the authority vested in the Office of the Governor of the State of Colorado, and in particular, pursuant to Article IV, Section 2, of the Colorado Constitution, I, John W. Hickenlooper, Governor of the State of Colorado, hereby issue this Executive Order creating a Commission to Study American Indian Representations in Public Schools.

I. Background, Need and Purpose

American Indians have resided in Colorado for centuries. Within the boundaries of the present State of Colorado, numerous indigenous nations hunted, gathered, and lived in every part of the state. The early settlement of Colorado resulted in displacement of American Indians from their land, as well as the loss of language, culture, and lives. The offensive use of tribal names and American Indian imagery became more apparent in early media publications as these wars, massacres, and displacements occurred. The use of imagery and names that are offensive and degrading to American Indians in institutions of public education dishonors the ongoing legacy of American Indians in the State of Colorado. The use of these images and names may be steeped in local traditions and important to community identity, but they may also reinforce negative stereotypes about American Indians and limit public knowledge about actual indigenous culture and heritage.

Two legislative bills, related to the use of American Indian mascots in institutions of public education, have been introduced in the General Assembly over the last five years and both failed to pass. In 2010, Senator Suzanne Williams sponsored Senate Bill 10-107, "Concerning

the Use of American Indian Mascots by Public High Schools.” The bill would have required each public high school of a school district, and each charter high school, that uses an American Indian mascot to cease using the mascot, obtain approval for the continued use of the mascot, or select another mascot from the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs. In 2015, Representative Joe Salazar sponsored House Bill 15-1165, “Concerning the Use of American Indian Mascots of Institutions of Public Education.” The bill would have established a subcommittee to evaluate and approve or reject the use of American Indian mascots by public schools and public institutions of higher education within the State. Neither of these legislative bills passed. Concerns about preserving local traditions and costs to school districts (particularly in rural communities) played a role in the legislative outcome.

Some school districts in Colorado have found constructive and collaborative ways to migrate away from offensive ethnic caricatures and mascots without disrupting school traditions or incurring costs that detract from student learning. In some cases, these districts have even found ways to use the debate over offensive mascots as an opportunity to educate students about our common history and bring diverse communities together.

It is in that spirit, we believe a more open and ongoing discussion and study is needed to identify how affected communities can respect the culture of American Indians while maintaining community traditions. One of the goals of this Commission is to host public discussions among constituents who feel strongly connected with these names and images without the threat of revoking state funding or issuing penalties.

II. Mission and Scope

The Commission shall facilitate discussion around the use of American Indian imagery and names used by institutions of public education and develop recommendations for the Governor and the General Assembly regarding the future use of such imagery and names. Through dialogue between representatives from federally recognized tribes, Colorado’s American Indians, institutions of public education, state agencies, and community stakeholders, the Commission will explore the manner in which images and names are perceived in relationship to individual, historical, and cultural perspectives. The Commission will also reach out to affected communities to gather more information about the community response to the usage of American Indian imagery and evaluate potential impacts to both rural and urban communities. Representatives from American Indian tribes and urban populations will guide discussion on the offensive nature of some images and names, the effects of these images and names on members of their communities, and opportunities for cooperation. The Commission will create a list of recommendations for the State of Colorado to address the issue of American Indian imagery and names in institutions of public education in a way that serves all affected communities.

III. Membership

The Commission shall consist of no more than fifteen (15) members and shall be appointed by the Governor. The Governor shall appoint the Chair and Co-chair of the Commission. Efforts will be made to ensure representation from all areas of the state. The members of the Commission shall be as follows:

- i. Chair;
- ii. Co-Chair;
- iii. Four representatives from statewide education organizations;
- iv. One representative of the Southern Ute Tribe;
- v. One representative of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe;
- vi. One representative from the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs;
- vii. One representative from the Denver American Indian Commission;
- viii. One representative from the Native American Rights Fund;
- ix. The Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Education or his or her designee;
- x. Three members of the public.

IV. Duration

This Executive Order shall continue in existence until April 4, 2016, or until such time as it is either terminated or extended beyond that date by further Executive Order of the Governor.



GIVEN under my hand and the
Executive Seal of the State of
Colorado, this fifth day of
October, 2015.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "John W. Hickenlooper".

John W. Hickenlooper
Governor