



Change the Mascot!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Change the Mascot Praises U.S. Congressman John Katko of New York for Speaking Out in Opposition to R-Word Racial Slur

Oneida Nation Homelands (Feb. 17, 2016) U.S. Congressman John Katko of New York has become the latest to join the Change the Mascot campaign in public opposition to the Washington NFL team's racist R-word name and mascot. News broke today that the Representative sent a letter to NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell encouraging him to endorse a name change and saying the term "represents a hateful, hurtful, slur from a bygone era."

Oneida Nation Representative Ray Halbritter, leader of the Change the Mascot campaign, praised Katko for his letter to the NFL Commissioner in opposition to the Washington franchise's name:

"On behalf of Change the Mascot, I applaud U.S. Congressman John Katko for having the moral courage to stand up and speak the truth about the harmful nature of the disparaging R-word racial slur. Congressman Katko's letter is the latest example that there are political leaders from both parties who are taking a stand against the perpetuation of this degrading epithet."

"Representative Katko's characterization of the term as a 'hateful, hurtful, slur from a bygone era' is absolutely on-target. I sincerely hope that Commissioner Goodell will finally start to heed the mounting calls for change from Republicans, Democrats, non-profit organizations, Native American tribes, sports icons, and Americans from all walks of life, and finally use his power to retire this outdated and offensive name and mascot."

The letter from Katko to Goodell stated: “To millions of people – Native Americans and Non-Native Americans alike – this team name represents a hateful, hurtful slur from a bygone era, and the time has come for a change. A mutual love of sports unites tens of millions of Americans across all regions, ethnic groups, income levels and faiths. However, I believe that the continued use of an ethnic slur as a name for one of the most established teams in the NFL stands in stark contradiction of this unifying tradition and calls into question the League’s values... I am proud to join the call for this change.”

With his letter Congressman Katko joins a diverse coalition of advocates including 50 U.S. Senators, including both Senators from New York State, who also sent a letter to the Commissioner. A number of other Members of U.S. House of Representatives, as well as governors, mayors, city councils, and even the President of the United States have also spoken out in opposition.

Change the Mascot is a grassroots campaign that works to educate the public about the damaging effects on Native Americans arising from the continued use of the R-word. This civil and human rights movement has helped reshape the debate surrounding the Washington team’s name and brought the issue to the forefront of social consciousness. Since its launch, Change the Mascot has garnered support from prominent advocates including elected officials from both parties, Native American tribes, sports icons, leading journalists and news publications, civil and human rights organizations and religious leaders.

A copy of Katko’s letter can be found at: http://www.onondaganation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Senator_Katko.pdf.

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