

A RESOLUTION

20-325

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

November 5, 2013

To declare the sense of the Council that the Washington National Football League Team change its name.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the “Sense of the Council to Rename the Washington National Football League Team Resolution of 2013”.

Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia finds that:

(1) In 1992, 8 members of the Council of the District of Columbia introduced a resolution, P.R. 9-330, requesting a change in the name of Washington’s National Football League (“NFL”) football team. In 2001, the Council adopted a resolution, Res. 14-263, requesting a change in the team’s name. On May 1, 2013, 9 members of the current Council introduced the present resolution.

(2) For more than 80 years, the Washington NFL football team has brought great pride and joy to the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area.

(3) The word “redskins” is objectionable to many Americans who consider it to be racist and derogatory, and the use of the term is increasingly considered to be insensitive in our multi-cultural society.

(4) A quick survey of dictionaries demonstrates this evolution in the meaning of the word. The 1964 edition of the *Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language* defined “redskin” to mean: “A North American Indian.” The 1983 edition of the *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* defines “redskin” to mean: “American Indian – usually taken to be offensive.” The 1983 edition of the Random House Dictionary of the English Language Second Edition Unabridged defines “redskin” to mean: “*Slang (often disparaging and offensive)* A North American Indian.”

(5) Some believe that the term “redskins” was derived during a time in our nation when a bounty was offered on Native Americans, those killed by the bounty hunters were scalped as proof of their slaughter, and bounty hunters began referring to the scalps of the dead Native Americans as “redskins.”

(6) By a resolution, Res. 43-01, adopted on November 14, 2001, the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments found that “the term ‘Redskins’ is

viewed by many sensitive and progressive-minded individuals as a demeaning and dehumanizing racist insult that embodies a history of degradation and slaughter.”

(7) In recent years, prominent sports writers such as Peter King have urged using a name different than “Redskins” for the name of a sports team. Most recently, NBC announcer Bob Costas urged a name change for the Washington NFL football team: “...think for a moment about the term ‘Redskins,’ and how it truly differs from all the others. Ask yourself what the equivalent would be, if directed toward African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, or members of any other ethnic group. When considered that way, ‘Redskins’ can’t possibly honor a heritage, or noble character trait, nor can it possibly be considered a neutral term. It’s an insult, a slur, no matter how benign the present-day intent.”

(8) A number of sports teams have changed names that reference Native Americans. St. John’s (New York) changed its mascot from the Redmen to the Red Storm, and the Miami University (Ohio) Redskins are now the Red Hawks – to list 2 among many.

(9) On October 15, 2013, the Anti-Defamation League called on professional sports teams to “seriously consider moving away from the use of hurtful and offensive names, mascots and logos,” and specifically cited the Washington Redskins.

(10) Ten days earlier, President Barack Obama said he would consider changing the Washington NFL football team’s name if he owned the football team, saying such names offend “a sizable group of people.” He further added: “I don’t know whether our attachment to a particular name should override the real legitimate concerns that people have about these things.”

(11) Changing the long-standing name of the professional sports team might have an economic cost—the cost of losing a well-known brand. However, profit should not trump doing what is morally right.

(12) In 1995, Abe Pollin, the owner of Washington’s professional basketball team, announced he was changing the team’s name because the word “bullets” was associated with violence, an association with which he was uncomfortable in part because of the high number of homicides and gun-related violence at that time in Washington, D.C. As a result, the team’s name was changed.

(13) Last month the San Francisco Chronicle joined a growing list of publications that no longer use the word “redskins” when referring to Washington’s NFL football team. Other publications include the Portland Oregonian, Kansas City Star, Slate.com, Washington City Paper, and Richmond Free Press.

(14) The Council of the District of Columbia is in an important position to acknowledge the controversy over our local NFL football team’s name, and to urge the football team’s owners to end the controversy and rectify what many believe to be an insult by changing the name of the Washington NFL football team.

Sec. 3. It is the sense of the Council that:

(1) Out of respect for the multi-racial and cultural makeup of this nation, our city, and the team’s fans, the Washington NFL football team should change its name;

(2) Changing the name of an NFL franchise, while not a simple task, is the right and prudent thing to do in this case; and

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(3) The owner of the Washington NFL football team is hereby urged to change the name of the football team to a name that is not offensive to Native Americans or any other ethnic group.

Sec. 4. The Chairman of the Council shall transmit copies of this resolution to the principal owner of the Washington NFL football team, Dan Snyder, and to NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell.

Sec. 5. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon the first date of publication in the District of Columbia Register.