

BETTY McCOLLUM
4TH DISTRICT, MINNESOTA

1714 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-6631
FAX: (202) 225-1968

165 WESTERN AVENUE NORTH
SUITE 17
ST. PAUL, MN 55102
(651) 224-9191
FAX: (651) 224-3056

www.house.gov/mccollum



UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR,
ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES

SENIOR DEMOCRATIC WHIP

CONGRESSIONAL
GLOBAL HEALTH CAUCUS,
CO-FOUNDER

CONGRESSIONAL
NATIVE AMERICAN CAUCUS,
CO-CHAIR

October 18, 2013

Governor Mark Dayton
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Attorney General Lori Swanson
102 State Capitol
75 Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Sen. Bobby Joe Champion, Co-Chair
Legislative Commission on Minnesota Sports
Facilities
306 State Capitol
75 Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Sen. Julie Rosen, Co-Chair
Legislative Commission on Minnesota Sports
Facilities
139 State Office Building
100 Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Mayor R.T. Rybak
City of Minneapolis
350 S. 5th Street, Room 331
Minneapolis, MN 55415

City Council President Barbara Johnson
City of Minneapolis
350 S. 5th Street, Room 331
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Ms. Michele Kelm-Helgen, Chair
Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority
The Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome
900 South 5th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Dear Governor Dayton, Attorney General Swanson, Sen. Champion, Sen. Rosen,
Mayor Rybak, Council President Johnson, and Chair Helgen:

On November 7th the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome will be the site of a National Football League (NFL) game between the Minnesota Vikings and the Washington NFL franchise. As you are aware, the Washington team is a privately owned business that chooses to use the disparaging and demeaning brand "Redskins" as their mascot. In my view, this NFL team's mascot is an unacceptable racial slur disparaging to Native Americans and offensive to Minnesotans. This view is shared by leaders throughout the Native American community who have spent decades advocating for a change to this harmful, discriminatory mascot.

In fact, only last week the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) released a report entitled "*Ending the Legacy of Racism in Sports & the Era of Harmful 'Indian' Sports Mascots.*" When citing the NFL's Washington franchise, NCAI's Executive Director Jacqueline Pata said:

"Unfortunately, the team's legacy and history is an ugly one, rooted in racism and discrimination, including the origins of the team's name. It is becoming more and more obvious that the team's legacy on racial equality is to remain on the wrong side of history for as long as possible."

The Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome is named in honor of the former Minneapolis mayor, U.S. Senator, and Vice President of the United States who championed civil rights and anti-discrimination. The Metrodome is a publicly operated facility financed by Minnesota taxpayers. The State of Minnesota and the City of Minneapolis have legal obligations to ensure this facility is a workplace and a public venue that is welcoming to all Minnesotans, including Native Americans, and free from the public display or announcement of any racial slur.

With regard to the NFL game on November 7th, it would be my hope that all state statutes, ordinances of the City of Minneapolis, and policies of the Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority (MSFA) regarding civil rights, non-discrimination, and affirmative action would be fully reviewed and applied with regard to displaying, publicly announcing, and promoting the Washington team's racially disparaging name and logo.

I have read news reports that the MSFA may have concerns about limiting the use of the Washington team's name and logo, as requested by some Native American groups, due to contractual obligations with the NFL. Such concerns should never trump the civil rights and anti-discrimination laws, ordinances, and policies of government bodies charged with defending and advancing the public interest.

The NFL and the owner of Washington's football team have a right to free speech. Constitutional protections allow them to offend, degrade, and disparage any race, ethnic group, religion, or person of any sexual orientation with their private funds within private spaces. But the people of Minnesota do not have an obligation to open the doors of our public sports facility and allow a for-profit entity to display and promote their racial slur. Indeed, we have an obligation to stand against the harmful denigration of protected classes of people in our public spaces, particularly when that demeaning language and imagery is targeted at a group that suffers from the highest rates of hate crimes and suicides in our nation.

As responsible and committed Minnesota leaders, I would urge you to take action to ensure that on November 7th the Metrodome remains a public venue where all Minnesotans, especially Native Americans, can work, watch, and enjoy a Vikings football game without a hostile, degrading, and offensive racial slur inflicted upon them.

Sincerely,



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress
Co-Chair, Congressional Native American Caucus

cc: Minnesota State Senate
Minnesota House of Representatives
Minneapolis City Council
Mr. Zygi Wilf, Minnesota Vikings
Mr. Roger Goodell, National Football League