

Legislation Text

File #: 140755, **Version:** 0

Recognizing and honoring the members of the *Neshaminy High School Playwickian* Editorial Board and their student advisor Tara Huber for taking a stand against racism and bigotry by refusing to continue to publish the traditional nickname for the Neshaminy High School athletic teams, a derogatory term for Native Americans.

WHEREAS, In the October 2013 issue of the *Neshaminy High School Playwickian*, the Editorial Board by a vote of 14-7 decided to cease printing the word “Redskin”, the traditional nickname for their sports team. In an editorial for that edition, the Board said, “The word ‘Redskin’ is racist and very much so...It is not a term of honor, but a term of hate”; and

WHEREAS, After the editorial was published, both the Neshaminy High School Principal, and the Neshaminy School Board moved to stop the editors from editing out the use of the word, arguing that they didn’t have the power to censor speech of other students. The editors have argued that if the word were offensive to other minority groups, they would have the power to edit that language; and

WHEREAS, In June 2013, the Neshaminy School Board voted to strip some power from *Playwickian* editors, and instead pass it along to school administrators to determine what should be published, arguably in violation of Section 12.9 of the Pennsylvania Administrative Code: Students Rights and Responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, Just this month, the *Playwickian’s* Editor-in-Chief, Gillian McGoldrick, was suspended from her editor’s position by the school administration for one month for again refusing to publish the offensive word; and

WHEREAS, Also, the paper’s faculty advisor, Tara Huber, was suspended without pay by the district Superintendent Robert Copeland for failing to stop the students from going through with their ban. Huber has been honored by the National Liberty Museum here in Philadelphia, and was named Teacher of the Year by the Pennsylvania School Press Association. Huber was also recently elected President of the Neshaminy Federation of Teachers; and

WHEREAS, The national debate over the use of derogatory sports team nicknames has been intensifying in recent years. Also in October 2013, President Obama, speaking about the Washington Redskins, said, “If I were the owner of the team and I knew that there was a name of my team - even if it had a storied history - that was offending a sizeable group of people, I’d think about changing it.” This July, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder called the Redskin name “offensive”, and said it should be changed; and

WHEREAS, Also this July, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office canceled six federal trademark registrations for “Washington Redskins” on the grounds that the team’s name is “disparaging to Native Americans”, and therefore in violation of trademark laws banning offensive or disparaging language; and

WHEREAS, The *Playwickian* personnel who were influential in taking this courageous stand are: Reed Hennessy, Madison Buffardi, Jackson Haines, Corey LaQuay, Emily Scott, Allison Kaufman, Timothy Cho, and Gillian McGoldrick. Also, these young people have received assistance from their advisors Tara Huber,

Gayle Sproul, a pro-bono attorney from Philadelphia, Frank LaMonte and Adam Goldstein, both of the Student Press Law Center; and

WHEREAS, When our young people take a stand on an important issue such as racism and bigotry, and they should be rewarded and congratulated, not vilified and denigrated. These young men and women, and their faculty advisor, deserve our praise for standing up for not only what is right and just, but also for standing up for their own journalistic integrity; now therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That Council does hereby honor and recognize the members of the *Neshaminy High School Playwickian* Editorial Board and their student advisor Tara Huber for taking a stand against racism and bigotry by refusing to continue to publish the traditional nickname for the Neshaminy High School athletic teams, a derogatory term for Native Americans.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the members of *Neshaminy High School Playwickian* Editorial Board as evidence of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.