

***The National Coalition for Equity in Public Service***

September 11, 2013

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20050

Dear President Obama:

RE: Request for Action to Address the Prevalence of Indian Mascot (i.e. Redskins) Caricature Displays and Racial Slur References in the Federal Workplace

You have stated, "As the Nation's largest employer, the Federal Government has a special obligation to lead by example." The Office of Personnel Management has officially recognized non-government "watchdog" groups such as those that make up the National Coalition for Equity in Public Service (NCEPS) whose members consist of Blacks In Government (BIG), the Society for American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE), Federally Employed Women (FEW), Federal Asian and Pacific American Council (FAPAC), National Image (IMAGE), Federal Employees with Disabilities (FEDs Inc.) and FEDQ, the national LGBT affinity group.

NCEPS advocates for mutual concerns related to employment equality in the Federal workplace and also believes in leading by example. NCEPS National Presidents, on behalf of their members and in solidarity with Native Americans, requests that the White House and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) take immediate action pursuant to the attached Resolution adopted on August 19, 2013 at the annual assembly of the BIG National Delegates in Dallas, Texas, seeking to rid the federal workplace of this racial slur and stereotypical caricature of Native American people related to the "Redskins" mascot.

In June 2013 NCEPS leadership gathered at the SAIGE Conference and heard from Native American federal employees that the term "redskins" is unequivocally an offensive racial epithet and that for those employed in the Washington DC area and nationwide, this racial slur coupled with the prevalence of the Redskins mascot caricature, is a daily burden to be tolerated in the federal workplace. The language in the attached Resolution conceived via this conference has been validated by historical research and agreed to be the best intent and purpose for this Resolution.

The federal government has assumed the responsibility for ensuring a work environment for employees that is free from discrimination and bias. The federal government prohibits discrimination in employment based on race and this policy<sup>1</sup> of equal employment opportunity must be an integral part of every aspect of personnel policy and practice in the employment and treatment of civilian employees of the federal government. Underscoring these statements, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was created and empowered with legal oversight of federal agencies to ensure that the federal workplace is free from racial discrimination and activities that may create a hostile environment for employees.

Clearly, the Executive Branch and Congress are committed to ensuring that the Federal workplace is fair and respectful to all employees regardless of their race or ethnicity. Yet, in the federal workplaces located in and around Washington DC, there are pervasive stereotypical depictions and written racial slurs related to Native Americans through the display Redskins' team paraphernalia as well as widespread spoken use of the racial epithet "redskins". Similar offensive images and language in reference to other racial and ethnic groups is widely seen as unacceptable in the Federal workplace.

Though this standard has been applied to other racial and ethnic groups for decades, this standard is not being adhered to in relation to Native Americans employed in federal agencies.

The White House and OPM are actively working to foster a diverse and inclusive environment for all employees and achieving an inclusive work environment where the social identities of Native Americans are appreciated and accurately included cannot be achieved while the stereotypical images and racial slurs referencing Native Americans remain prevalent in the Federal workplace.

NCEPS strongly urges the White House and OPM to issue a directive to federal agencies and contractor affiliates that the use of the term "Redskins" and the stereotypical depiction of Native American mascots are considered offensive and thereby prohibited from use in and on government property.

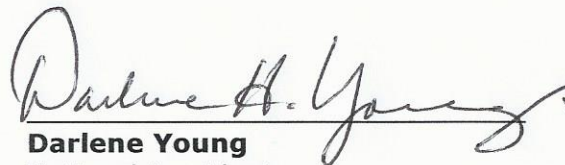
NCEPS stands ready to work with President Obama by offering this Resolution and training opportunities in further support of the "*Therefore Be It Resolved*" clause, affording Native American employees in the federal workplace the equal treatment and protections that are given to employees of other racial and ethnic backgrounds.

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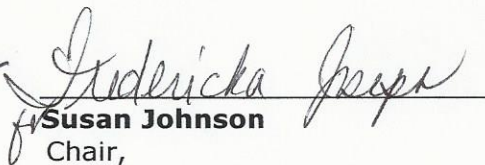
<sup>1</sup> Executive Order 13087



You may contact any of the organization leaders below through the NCEPS Executive Director, Ms. Cheryle Zwang, at email [czwang@blm.gov](mailto:czwang@blm.gov) or telephone (208) 283-0774.



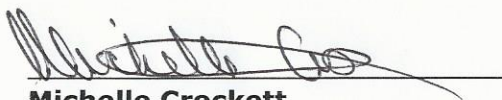
**Darlene Young**  
National President  
Blacks In Government, Inc. (BIG)



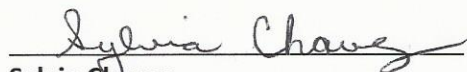
**Susan Johnson**  
Chair,  
Society of American Indian Government  
Employees (SAIGE)



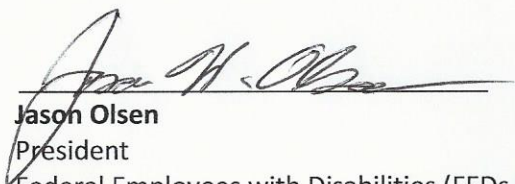
**Kin Wong**  
President,  
Asian Pacific American Council, (FAPAC)




**Michelle Crockett**  
President,  
Federally Employed Women, INC.



**Sylvia Chavez**  
President Chair and CEO  
National IMAGE, Inc.



**Jason Olsen**  
President  
Federal Employees with Disabilities (FEDs Inc.)



**Matthew Murphy**  
President  
National LGBT Affinity Group (FEDQ)

Encl: BIG Resolution, adopted August 18, 2013

CC'd electronically:

Ms. Elaine Kaplan, Acting Director, Office of Personnel Management  
Ms. Jodi Archambault-Gillette, Senior Policy Advisor on Native American Affairs, White House  
Ms. Veronica Villalobos, Director, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, OPM  
Ms. Jacqueline Berrien, Chair, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission  
Mr. David Lopez, General Counsel, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission  
Ms. Jacqueline Johnson-Pata, Executive Director, National Congress of American Indians  
Mr. Richard Cohen, President, Southern Poverty Law Center  
Mr. Benjamin Jealous, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Ms. Barbara Arnwine, President and Executive Director, Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law  
Ms. Mary Smith, President, National Native American Bar Association  
Mr. Josh Clause, President, Native American Bar Association of District of Columbia  
Mr. Eni Faleomavega, Member of Congress, American Samoa  
Mr. Tom Cole, Member of Congress, Oklahoma  
Ms. Betty McCollum, Member of Congress, Minnesota  
Mr. Raul Grijalva, Member of Congress, Arizona  
Ms. Gwen Moore, Member of Congress, Wisconsin  
Mr. Michael Honda, Member of Congress, California  
Ms. Donna Christensen, Member of Congress, Virgin Islands  
Ms. Zoe Lofgren, Member of Congress, California  
Ms. Barbara Lee, Member of Congress, California  
Ms. Eleanor Holmes Norton, Member of Congress, District of Columbia  
Mr. John Lewis, Member of Congress, Georgia  
Ms. Mary Pavel, Staff Director and Chief Counsel, Senate Committee on Indian Affairs  
Ms. Sally Jewell - U.S. Secretary of the Interior