

October 10, 2013

The Honorable Mignon Clyburn
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairwoman Clyburn and Fellow FCC Commissioners,

We respectfully ask that you convene an open forum with broadcasters to determine whether they should self-regulate their use of the term “XXXskins” when referring to the Washington D.C football team.

As you may know, momentum for this movement has been rapidly growing. The most recent ally to join the cause is President Obama, who said in an interview this Saturday, “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.” Furthermore, a recent poll on the issue shows that public opinion is also shifting. 68% of a group of randomly surveyed Washingtonians said they would either encourage or not care if owner Dan Snyder were to change the team name. Also, 63% of those surveyed either would approve of broadcast TV stations not using the current name or do not care if broadcasters stop using that name. Only 37% would disapprove of broadcasters if they no longer used the name. Several media leaders, including Peter King (Sports Illustrated) and Mike Wise (Washington Post), have already recognized this shift and agreed to abandon use of the term “XXXskins.”

The image of Washington is prominent throughout this country and the world. To continue arguing that the name “XXXskin” is an honor to Native Americans requires willful ignorance, which casts enormous doubt on team leadership. It is inevitable that this will make an already difficult situation in the nation’s capital worse. As all of us have learned in international diplomacy, strength is essential to leadership and that includes moral strength. To tie this name to Washington’s football team hurts that strength.

The FCC has unquestioned authority to convene an open forum with broadcasters to discuss whether they should voluntarily stop using the name (See 47 U.S.C. §§151 and 403). We emphasize that this discussion between broadcasters and the FCC need not answer any questions of legality nor necessarily lead to regulatory intervention. Rather, the purpose of the forum should be to address the issue of self-regulation and its application to the term in question.

We believe that by capitalizing on this authority, the FCC has the opportunity to act as a principled and transparent leader during a time of distressing difficulty in the nation’s capital.

Sincerely,

Professor Jasmine Abdel-khalik
Jonathan Adelstein
Tyrone Brown
John E. Echohawk
Professor Anthony Farley
Charles M. Firestone
Henry Geller
Debbie Goldman
David Honig
Reed Hundt

Larry Irving
Nicholas Johnson
Kathy Ko Chin
Ambassador Karen Kornbluh
Blair Levin
Jacqueline Mac
Nicholas Miller
Mee Moua
John T. Nakahata
Karen Narasaki
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development
Professor Katheryn Russell-Brown
Professor Natsu Taylor Saito
Dr. Heather Shotton
Sonny Skyhawk
Andrew Schwartzman
Christopher J. Wright