

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 21, 2014

Mr. Roger Goodell  
Commissioner  
National Football League  
345 Park Avenue  
New York, NY 10154

Dear Commissioner Goodell:

This month, Americans applauded the rapid and decisive reaction from new National Basketball Association Commissioner Adam Silver to the racist remarks of Los Angeles Clippers owner Donald Sterling. Commissioner Silver sent a clear message that racism will not stand in the NBA.

Today, we urge you and the National Football League to send the same clear message as the NBA did: that racism and bigotry have no place in professional sports. It's time for the NFL to endorse a name change for the Washington, D.C. football team.

The despicable comments made by Mr. Sterling have opened up a national conversation about race relations. We believe this conversation is an opportunity for the NFL to take action to remove the racial slur from the name of one of its marquee franchises.

Professional sports have tremendous power to influence American society and strengthen our communities. From Jesse Owens to Jackie Robinson to Billie Jean King, athletes have often been a driving force for equality and diversity in our nation.

Now is the time for the NFL to act. The Washington, D.C. football team is on the wrong side of history. What message does it send to punish slurs against African Americans while endorsing slurs against Native Americans?

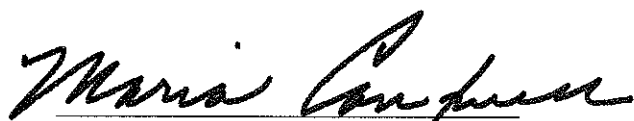
This is a matter of tribal sovereignty – and Indian Country has spoken clearly on this issue. To this point, we have heard from every national Tribal organization, including the National Congress of American Indians, United South and Eastern Tribes, and the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians. These organizations represent more than 2 million Native Americans across the country and more than 300 Tribes with government-to-government relationships with the United States. These organizations have passed resolutions in support of a name change as they find the Washington, D.C. football team name to be racially offensive. We have heard from tribes across the country, including the Navajo Nation, the largest tribe in the Country, who

oppose this name. To understand this viewpoint, we urge you to watch the video, "Proud To Be", posted on the National Congress of American Indians website.

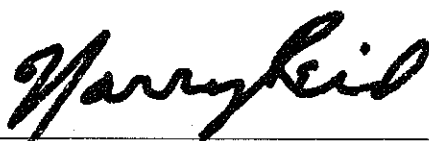
At the heart of sovereignty for tribes is their identity. Tribes have worked for generations to preserve the right to speak their languages and perform their sacred ceremonies. Many of today's tribal leaders have parents and grandparents who were punished and prosecuted for practicing their ceremonies or speaking their languages. That is why tribal leaders worked with Congress to enact laws like the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, the Native American Languages Act, the Indian Arts and Crafts Act, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. These are all federal laws intended to protect and respect tribal culture and identity. Yet every Sunday during football season, the Washington, D.C. football team mocks their culture.

The NFL can no longer ignore this and perpetuate the use of this name as anything but what it is: a racial slur. We urge the NFL to formally support and push for a name change for the Washington football team.

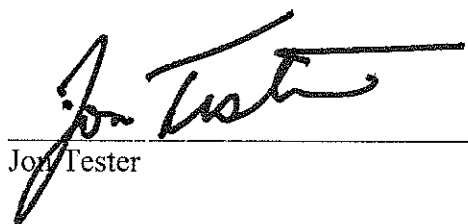
Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell



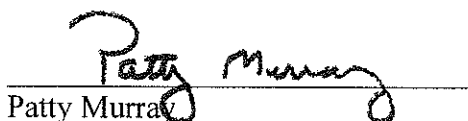
Harry Reid



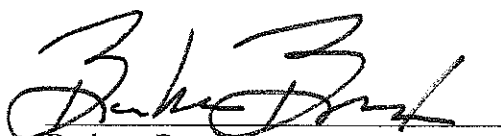
Jon Tester



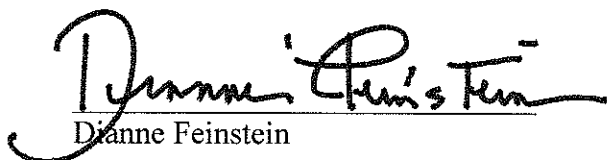
Charles Schumer



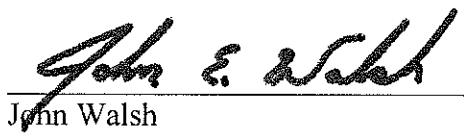
Patty Murray



Barbara Boxer



Dianne Feinstein



John Walsh



Sherrod Brown



Carl Levin



Mark Begich



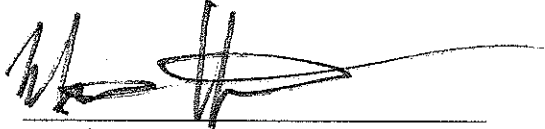
Brian Schatz



Christopher Coons



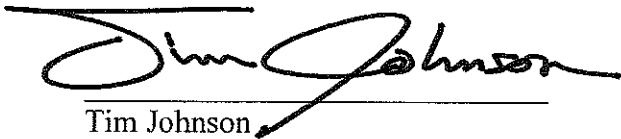
Kirsten Gillibrand



Martin Heinrich



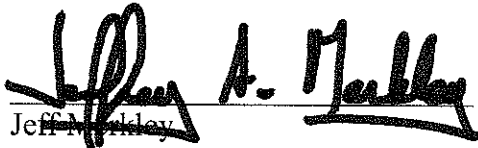
Mazie Hirono



Tim Johnson



Robert Menendez



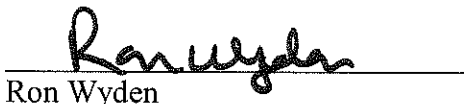
Jeff Merkley



Jay Rockefeller



Bernard Sanders



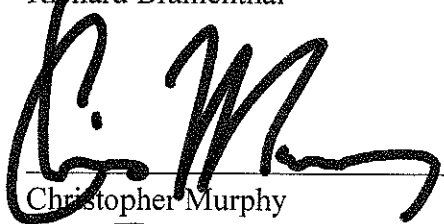
Ron Wyden



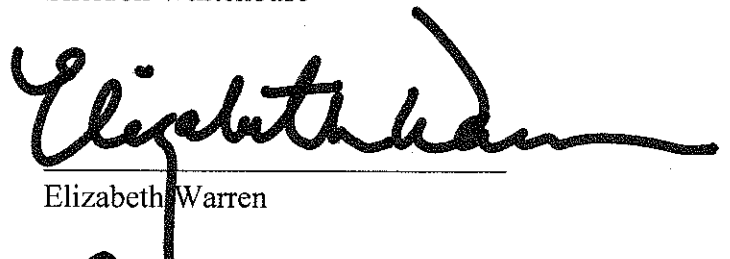
Richard Blumenthal



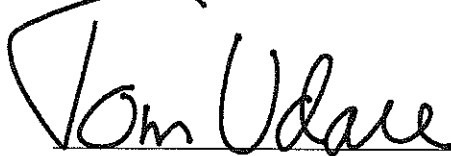
Sheldon Whitehouse



Christopher Murphy




Elizabeth Warren

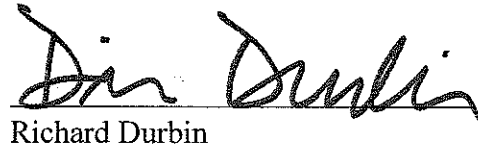


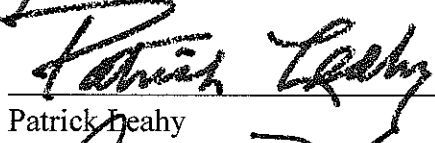
Tom Udall

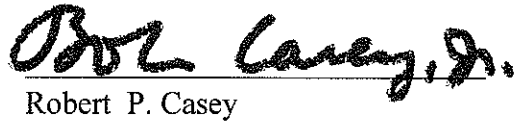


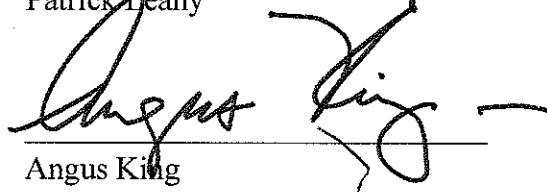
Debbie Stabenow

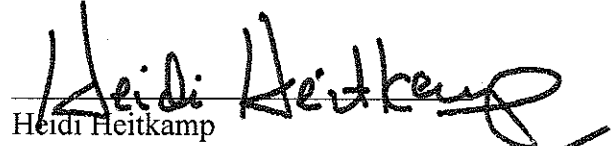
  
Jack Reed

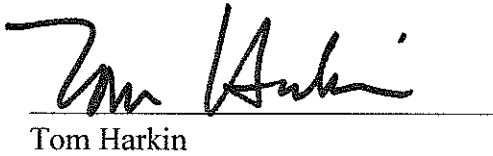
  
Richard Durbin

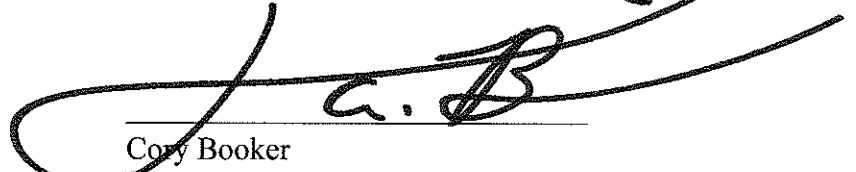
  
Patrick Leahy

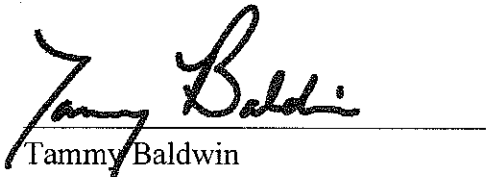
  
Robert P. Casey

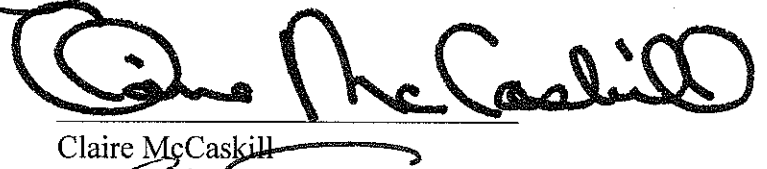
  
Angus King

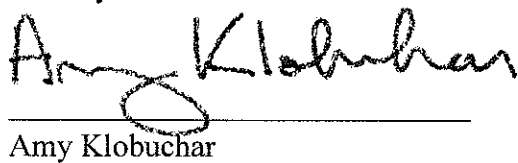
  
Heidi Heitkamp

  
Tom Harkin

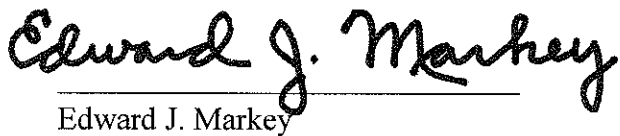
  
Cory Booker

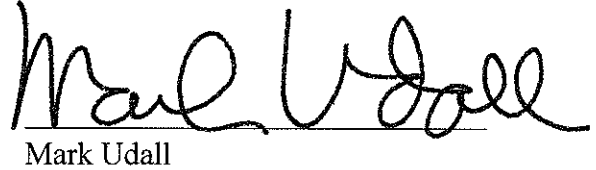
  
Tammy Baldwin

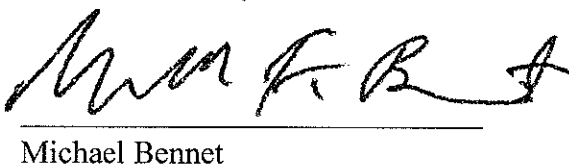
  
Claire McCaskill

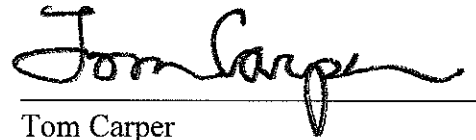
  
Amy Klobuchar

  
Al Franken

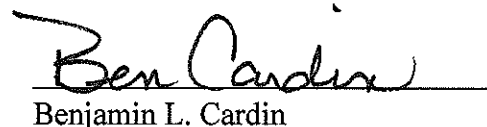
  
Edward J. Markey

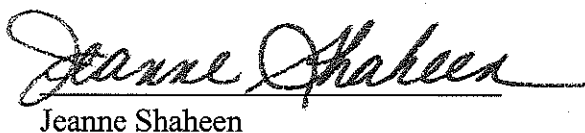
  
Mark Udall

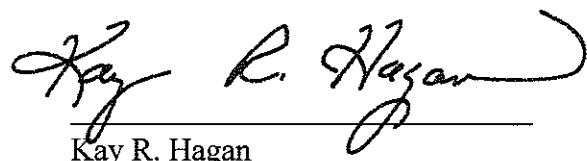
  
Michael Bennet

  
Tom Carper

  
Barbara A. Mikulski

  
Benjamin L. Cardin

  
Jeanne Shaheen

  
Kay R. Hagan

  
Mary L. Landrieu