



Legislation Summary:

An Act prohibiting the use of Native American mascots by public schools in the Commonwealth

Bill#: **H.477/S.245**

Chief Sponsor(s): Senator Jo Comerford and Representative Brandy Fluker Oakley

What the bill does, why LWVMA supports or opposes it, and the League position relative to this bill.

Twenty three MA K-12 schools continue to use Native American imagery as their school mascot. This bill would ban the use of Native American mascots in MA K-12 schools unless a tribal nation gives consent.

MassTrac Summary for HB477

Adds a new Section 98 to [GL Chapter 71](#) (Public Schools) directing DESE to promulgate regulations to ensure that no public school uses an athletic team name, logo or mascot associated with Native Americans; sets forth conditions under which certain exemptions may be made; clarifies that this prohibition does not apply to sports teams comprised of tribal members; further allows a tribal nation to give explicit consent for a school to use their tribal name.

League Positions:

LWVUS Impact on Issues, Principles, p. 10 : “The League of Women Voters believes no person or group should suffer legal, economic, or administrative discrimination.”

[LWVMA Board statement after the death of George Floyd](#), “Every member of our communities should be welcomed with open hearts into our institutions and our organizations. As civically engaged members of our communities from every corner of the Commonwealth, we must set the example with our words and actions for our children and grandchildren to demand a Massachusetts which is just and fair for all.”

In September 2021, [LWVUS issued guidance for culturally inclusive history curriculum to guide advocacy relating to history education](#).

An inclusive environment ensures equitable access to resources and opportunities for all. It also enables individuals and groups to feel safe, respected, engaged, motivated, and valued for who they are and for their contributions toward organizational and societal goals.

While an inclusive group is by definition diverse, a diverse group is not always inclusive. Being aware of unconscious or implicit bias can help organizations better address issues of inclusivity. (The Anti-Defamation League defines implicit bias as, “the unconscious attitudes and stereotypes and unintentional actions (positive or negative) toward members of a group merely because of their membership in that group.”)

We commit to making deliberate efforts to ensure LWV is a place where differences are welcomed, different perspectives are respectfully heard, and every individual feels a sense of belonging and inclusion. We know that by creating a vibrant climate of inclusiveness, we can more effectively leverage our resources to advance our collective capabilities.

We commit to working actively to challenge and respond to bias, harassment, and discrimination.

The League supports the teaching of a culturally inclusive history curriculum that includes instruction in Black, brown, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, Feminist, and Queer American history. This stance is grounded in several of the League’s official positions and in our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policy:

1. Equality of Opportunity
 1. Education, Employment, and Housing: Support [federal] efforts to prevent and/or remove discrimination in education, employment and housing and to help communities bring about racial integration of their school systems.
 2. The programs should be nondiscriminatory with provisions for enforcement.
2. Federal Role in Public Education
 1. **The League believes that an equitable, quality public education is critical for students.**
 2. **Support federal policies that provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through grade 12.**
3. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy: LWV is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to the organization’s current and future success in engaging all individuals, households, communities, and policy makers in creating a more perfect democracy. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, gender identity, ethnicity, race, native or indigenous origin, age, generation, sexual orientation, culture, religion, belief system, marital status, parental status, socioeconomic status, language, accent, ability status, mental health, educational level or background, geography, nationality, work style, work experience, job role function, thinking style, personality type, physical appearance, political perspective or affiliation and/or any other characteristic that can be identified as recognizing or illustrating diversity.

TALKING POINTS:

1. The League of Women Voters supports a comprehensive history education for all students.
2. The League of Women Voters supports all histories being taught in school, including Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, Feminist, and Queer American history.
3. A complete education requires a comprehensive approach that is inclusive of all American cultures. The teaching of history must reflect the perspectives and experiences of marginalized groups.
4. The League of Women Voters believes in creating a more just, equitable, and inclusive democracy. The teaching of comprehensive American history is integral to this effort.