

# OUR VIEW American Indian mascot debate not easy to resolve

*Murf Raquet/Moscow-Pullman Daily News*

Every so often, some jurisdiction or governing body will drag out the mascot-ethics issue for yet another vetting by pundits, candidates, college lecturers and editorialists.

This time around it's the Washington state Board of Education that wants school districts to replace their American Indian mascots.

That "want" holds no authority - it's merely a suggestion so the districts have no real incentive to change the status quo.

The board, which also passed a similar resolution in 1993, was acting on research by the American Psychological Association that concluded some American Indian students were adversely affected by such mascots.

The issue of American Indian mascots is not a new one. Those mascots have been used for years from parks and recreation leagues to the professional ranks.

The images of those mascots range from accurate renderings to caricatures. Along with the images, the nicknames such as braves, warriors, savages, chiefs and redskins also have come under fire.

Even tribal schools throughout the state are divided. Some have determined such mascots derogatory and have elected to change. Other schools have found the symbols to be a part of the community's history and have retained the mascots.

The Oregon state Board of Education in May banned the use of American Indian mascots, nicknames and logos. The affected schools have five years to comply.

The NCAA has also, on occasion, grappled with the question as have numerous professional sports leagues.

No one has come up with a good solution short of an outright ban - and that will never have any legs.

The questionable mascot issue has no easy answer. What is offensive to some may be acceptable to others. That's something we, as a diverse society, live with every day.

It's a very slippery slope when those in power - and it's more slippery the further their power reaches - start banning images or words they find offensive. History is littered with such actions.

As we see it, the best way to deal with objectionable mascots, among other issues is at the community level. That local litmus test has worked well in the past without the frenzied bluster a debate of wider scope creates.