



# SPIRIT LAKE TRIBE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 1, 2011

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### Spirit Lake Nation Official Statement on Petition Efforts

*The Spirit Lake Nation, through their Committee for Understanding and Respect, has issued the following statement on the day SB2370 (the Fighting Sioux Repeal Law) goes into effect to formally announce two petition drives to save their name and likeness from retirement by the University of North Dakota.*

FT. TOTTON, ND – Senate Bill 2370, the repeal of the law protecting our name and likeness, officially goes into effect today. While a somber occasion, it is also one which provides us an opportunity to remind everyone that this matter is far from settled. Our fight to save our name and likeness, and the proud honor and traditions of our People which they represent, is more alive than ever. We have always found strength in adversity, and the repeal is no exception. We remain more committed than ever to this fight, as do a vast number of other North Dakotans residing on and off our tribal nations. More are Standing With Us every day. We only grow stronger, and we will prevail.

We want everyone to know we are diligently finalizing the collection of affidavits for a referral measure to "Repeal the Repeal" of the law protecting our name and likeness, and an initiated measure to place our name in the Constitution. The people of North Dakota want to be heard on this matter, to include our brothers and sisters at Standing Rock. We intend to give all people in North Dakota that opportunity, both by signing the official petitions to get these issues on the ballot, and ultimately allowing them to cast their vote at the ballot box. We have more than enough affidavits for the sponsoring committees of each petition; it is now just a matter of getting them consolidated from all over the state. We will file the proposed petitions and affidavits with the Secretary of State on Friday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Once approved, we will be making announcements on how to sign the petitions, and how others can help circulate them.

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We need 13,000 signatures on the "Repeal the Repeal" petition within 90 days of the passage of the repeal law in the November special session. We need to work fast, but we know the support of our citizens is there. We will be working diligently to link our supporters up with those petitions in the days and weeks ahead, so that they can do their part to get a referendum of the Fighting Sioux Law repeal on the June 2012 Primary Election ballot. The great thing about a referendum petition is, once enough signatures are collected and submitted back to the Secretary of State, the law which the referendum petition applies to is placed on hold until the people can have their say at the next election. In this case, UND and SBHE will have to cease any further efforts to retire our proud name until this vote of the people can be held in June 2012. If that vote is successful in Repealing the Repeal, The Law protecting our name and likeness will be "The Law" again!

In addition, we are pursuing an initiated measure to add an amendment to the ND Constitution stating that the University of North Dakota's intercollegiate athletic teams shall be known as the Fighting Sioux. We need 27,000 signatures to get this measure on the ballot for the November 2012 election. If we are successful, Fighting Sioux will be entered into the Constitution and the matter will finally be settled; the will of the people will prevail, as it should be. North Dakotans at Standing Rock will also finally be given the vote they have been denied for so long.

Some unfortunately have believed the misinformation that our proud name and likeness is somehow hurting UND and their athletes. Our name and likeness has hurt no one in over 80 years. It has been proudly and honorably used by UND. After all, it was a gift given by our Elders to them; a gift that cannot simply be returned. Only the NCAA's misguided policy can hurt UND, and we have taken steps to resolve that issue as well in the form of a lawsuit. In spite of having several opportunities to do so, UND and the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education have failed to provide any solid proof that UND athletics will be hurt by our proud nickname and logo. To be sure, plenty of innuendo has been provided but solid proof based upon conclusive facts has been completely lacking.

Our lawsuit against the NCAA stands an excellent chance at success. If this lawsuit goes our way, the NCAA will never again be allowed to meddle in state business, nor infringe upon the religious freedoms of the Dakota Sioux. Their unfortunate policy will go away, along with its sanctions. This will resolve any lingering concerns of a few schools and a conference who point to the NCAA policy as their concern regarding UND, although they have never found time to speak to us directly about these concerns.

We also wish to point out that UND and the SBHE are not in compliance with the legislative intent behind Senate Bill 2370 passed in November 2011, specifically the three year moratorium. While the name may not be used for a while by the teams, retirement was not supposed to be happening either so our lawsuit has time to play out. Despite this intent, the Board and UND are moving full speed ahead with a quick retirement of our name and likeness, not thinking it is being noticed. The leadership of UND and the SBHE should know that it is noticed.

We also wish to point out that proceeds from Fighting Sioux licensing (and just the licensing; other figures are still being calculated based on information recently received) provided UND with \$660,000 or more of revenue last biennium. These figures were provided by UND to the Legislative Council for the November special session. This was funding that did not need to be made up by higher tuition paid by students and/or an increased burden on the taxpayers of North Dakota. More importantly, while we received no financial benefit ourselves from licensing, our proud name and likeness were positively portrayed worldwide. There is simply no reason why our name and likeness cannot continue to be licensed, even if the teams temporarily won't be wearing jerseys with our name and logo for the time being. There is also no need to be directing the transition of the names of student organizations and on campus businesses away from using our proud name. These are unnecessary changes which will generate increased costs to taxpayers, students, and customers. We challenge UND to continue to actively license the Fighting Sioux name and logo and stop other unnecessary transitions, as there is only benefits for UND, their students, the taxpayers of North Dakota, and our people in doing so. There is also simply no reason why it cannot continue to be licensed.

In closing, we thank all who have continued to Stand With Us in our fight, and welcome everyone who is now stepping up. This is a fight we will win with your support. Keep checking our website at [www.SaveTheFightingSioux.com](http://www.SaveTheFightingSioux.com) for details on how to support the petition drive and for other news on the ongoing fight to save our name. We can also be followed on Twitter and Facebook. Links to our presence at these sites can be found at [www.SaveTheFightingSioux.com](http://www.SaveTheFightingSioux.com).

Thanks, and Stand With Us!

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