



Gov. Walker, Don't Use Free Speech as a Scapegoat *Governor signals he will sign bill protecting racist team names and mascots*

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The ACLU of Wisconsin is urging Gov. Scott Walker to veto a bill that would protect racist team names and mascots.

Yesterday Walker signaled he would sign the bill, which would roll back a law passed in 2010. That law requires the state Department of Public Instruction to hold a hearing and decide whether to allow schools to keep race-based mascots and team names whenever it receives a complaint.

If Walker signs the bill, it will be much more difficult for the state to object to racist team names and mascots.

Walker has until tomorrow to approve or veto the bill. He has signaled that he will sign it, citing the First Amendment and a desire not to impinge on free speech.

Today, ACLU of Wisconsin executive director Chris Ahmuty issued this statement:

“This is a bogus appropriation of the First Amendment. The governor apparently does not understand that the First Amendment protects citizens from government censorship. Government programs are not allowed to offend, harm or otherwise discriminate against citizens on the basis of the First Amendment. The First Amendment simply doesn't apply when it's the government taking action.

School team names, mascots, logos and all that go along with them are the responsibility of the public school district. It's highly likely they are discriminatory. If the public school district doesn't change them, it is necessary for the Department of Public Instruction to do so.

Why would a public school district want to harm some of its students? Free speech is no justification.”

The ACLU of Wisconsin Foundation is a non-profit, non-partisan, private organization whose 7,000 members support its efforts to defend the civil rights and liberties of all Wisconsin residents. For more on the ACLU of Wisconsin, visit our [website](#), like us on [Facebook](#) or follow us on Twitter at [@ACLUofWisconsin](#) and [@ACLUMadison](#).