

Contest H :: Editorial Writing

2017 KSPA Regional Contest



DIRECTIONS

Failure to follow these directions may result in disqualification from the contest without refund. **Please read, listen and follow carefully.**

1. Please complete the first page of the packet, including your school code and your name using the bubble chart provided.
2. Please take time to write your student code in the top right corner of each page you will use for your writing in this contest.
3. Please do not include your name or the name of your high school on the entry. If you do, your entry will be disqualified.
4. You are to write an editorial running in the next edition of the Sunflower News, your newspaper. The writer should determine the newspaper's official opinion on the controversy and present an effective argument. The editorial should be approximately 200 words in length.
 - a. Please use the information provided below. The writer should determine which information is relevant and important to the editorial. Students may write in pencil or pen. Students may use dictionary, thesaurus and/or the Associated Press style manual. The use of personal listening devices, recording devices, cell phones, computers or other electronics is prohibited.
5. When you are finished with the writing, please bring this entire packet to the proctors at the front of the room **and remain at the table until they have checked your entry.**
6. Please leave the room quietly. Congratulations on writing well done!

DESCRIPTION

You are a member of Sunflower High School's journalism staff. Your editor has asked you to write an editorial using the information provided.

SCHOOL INFO

Name: Sunflower High School

Location: Clinton, Kansas

Mascot: Mighty Buffalo

Enrollment: 800 (grades 9-12)

School colors: yellow and brown

Yearbook: The Sunflower

Newspaper: Sunflower News

Contest Info

This is an on-site contest.

Do not put your name on the entry.

If you do, your entry will be disqualified.

Students may not request help or advice from any person other than the KSPA Executive Director Eric Thomas at

staff@kspaonline.org, and that advice must be requested before the start of the contest.

All work must be solely that of the contestant.

Dispute over North Clinton's 'Redskins' mascot nears hearing

By George Hendricks, Sunflower News staff writer

A preliminary ruling by the Clinton County Human Relations Commission has found that North Clinton's mascot is offensive and should be changed. Meanwhile, the Clinton County School district is pushing for a full hearing so it can fight to keep the nickname "Redskins."

North Clinton resident Benita Gordon first filed a complaint with the Clinton County Human Relations Commission back in August of 2015, charging that the North Clinton High School Redskins name was a racial slur that discriminates against her son.

After months of inaction, a commission administrator quietly sided with her in January 2016, recommending further proceedings. Last week, a full hearing before the 11-member commission was announced, though it hasn't been scheduled yet.

"Yeah, I feel sort of vindicated," said Gordon. "Just to be able to tell them 'Here, this is what these people who have authority, who write the rules that you're supposed to follow, this is what they think of you, and this is what they think of your school district and your behavior.'"

Gordon, of Native American heritage, said it took her months to file the initial complaint. But attorney Lee Norris, representing the Clinton County School District, said the complaint was vague and doesn't match what the district is charged with by the commission's preliminary finding.

"What she filed in her complaint and what was stated in the probable cause findings by some unnamed administrator are two different things," said Norris. "In other words, this case has morphed into something which we were never given advanced notice or an opportunity to respond."

Norris, who maintains that context of the use of the name matters, said the district will fight for as long as it takes, potentially all the way to federal court.

"That's our whole point, the school district will not tolerate the improper use of the word Redskins, but there's also a proper use that is not derogatory," Norris said.

"It's highly ridiculous, and they're just bringing more shame to themselves," responded Gordon. "When you've got these [non-discrimination] policies in your school district and then you say 'Yeah, but we have an exception' -- there is no exception to the rule, there's no exception for Native American people but they've chosen to ignore their own policies. This school district looks like a joke and it's really sad. I have no trust in these people."

Gordon said she doesn't care how long the hearings last, she'd fight it even after her son graduates if that's what it takes. A year after Gordon initially filed her complaint to the CCHRC, she became eligible to take the case to court. She said she met with a CCHRC representative at a conciliation meeting of all involved parties back in early February, to see if a settlement could be reached.

"I got the vibe that these people [the commission], they've made their decision, and now we just have to follow the order of the way things go," said Gordon. "I don't feel I'm being ignored or it's fallen by the wayside."

Gordon said the meeting didn't last long. When Norris walked in, she said, he asked if this preliminary finding meant they had to change the name. When the CCHRC representative said yes, Gordon said Norris essentially turned and walked out.

Norris said the school district was well prepared to do a number of things, including training for students about the different aspects of the use of the word and the history of it, but says the commission was unwilling to consider anything unless the district stopped using the term.

"Since they weren't willing to consider any compromise of any nature, the meeting ended," said Norris.