

Dear UTAH State elected official:

SB10 (Place Name Amendments) is very problematic on several levels. In fact to make it out of committee is beyond understanding. It does not meet the prima facie standards required of good legislation.

There is no rationale provided for this bill. There is no reasoning given that American Indian Place names should be changed. Do current names harm anyone in a quantifiable way? How many people are harmed and in what way? Is there an historical meaning that we are unaware of that should be taught? Because there is no reasonable justification made for this bill the reader is left to assume that this comes on the wave of social justice run amok indicating thought processes that are myopic at best. The reader is left to wonder under what circumstances would names be changed and by whom? Who is on the committee? What would the recourse be if they are not elected? How long would they serve and what is the continuity? Would a new governor choose a committee who would then deem it necessary to change the name back when another group applies later on? What are their qualifications? What are the criteria for changing a name?

No criteria are given except a tangential mention of the word squaw. But no rationale is given to change even that term nor is any alternative given. Does Ms. Iwamoto know where the term squaw came from? A little research reveals that the word comes from the Algonquin language. It meant woman and was learned by Europeans to describe Native females. Since this was the first experience in a new world and language, it stuck. It never was used in reference to body parts as some suggest. In fact most historians and linguists appear to be more supportive of a non-derogatory meaning. Modern derogatory usage appears to have originated in Hollywood in old westerns. So, why we are allowing "Hollywood" to dictate linguistics? That is ludicrous. Would it not be better to educate our selves on the meaning and history of the word? Many people profane the word "God" but do we change that word? Do we ask "God" to change that word? Do we change that word because some of us are offended when it is used in an inappropriate way? Do we appoint a committee to decide?

The linguist Anatoly Liberman said it well when he reminded us that "Etymology is a science and in serious situations should be left to specialists. The motto of every political initiative should be: "Do no harm" (as in medicine). Looking before leaping is also useful. Although language is easy to politicize, historical linguistics rarely falls prey to this kind of maneuvering. (OUPblog, Oxford University Press.)

Is this bill an attempt to make "things" better for the American Indian? - If so, in what way? Social problems existent in the American Indian Community such as high alcoholism, domestic abuse, and poverty are not caused by geographic names. Those issues would be better addressed in a different manner and a more productive use of resources time and energy. Did Senator Iwamoto do anything to

help the Navajo Nation (part of the reservation is in Utah) during the COVID crisis? Did she organize help, or donate to the St. Martins Project sponsored by Chriskindlemrkt - an organization of German descendants who collected tons of supplies for their American Indian neighbors. This is what unity looks like. Did any official reading this letter do something really substantial to help the underserved communities of Utah including the American Indian community during COVID? Part of the reason this community was hit so hard is that there are many who don't have running water, indoor plumbing etc. Washing hands is pretty hard under those circumstances. Based upon this analysis, this bill comes across as a hollow attempt to better society under the dubious banner of social justice and is grandstanding at a pathetic level. To vote for this bill is an attempt to assuage the conscience of lawmakers into thinking that a yes vote would really help the American Indian and is the epitome of hypocrisy.

One news report mentioned that "squaw cave" in the Cedar City area might be considered. Why? Here is the history of that name.

William R. Palmer, a noted former historian in Southern Utah reports:

"I asked an old Indian once why they traded their children away and he said it was the only way they could get horses and guns. He (the Indian) said they could make more children but they had nothing else to trade for horses and guns... "

"...I asked how the Indian women felt about the slave traffic and the old man said they were scared to death. When a Spanish party was in the country, the women tried to take their children and run away and hide. They were as much afraid of their husbands as of the Spaniards while the party was in their country. Only the old and crippled women stayed in camp, for the Spaniards would not trade for them."

"In all this slave traffic, many of the Indians, especially the women, were not as heartless as would appear. Some of them followed the caravans for days seeking an opportunity to steal their children back. When one succeeded she was hunted ruthlessly and if caught was taken into slavery with her child. Still this danger did not deter them from making the attempt. There are stories among the Indians about these women hunts which seem to be well authenticated."

"Near Cedar City (Utah) there is a narrow box canyon known as Squaw Cave. Its sheer walls are fifty to sixty feet high. Some Spaniards were chasing an escaped squaw around through the hills. Seeing that she could not escape, as the woman ran with her pursuers close behind, to the edge of the cliff and dived off head first, dashing her self to death on the rocky floor."

The Old Spanish Trail, Hafen and Hafen (pp 281)

Would the "Committee" want to change the name of that cave named in honor of a woman who preferred liberty over death? What should it be named? Her name has been lost to history also too where she came from and from what tribe. We must keep her story alive. We have only ourselves to blame when we don't teach and understand history better.

What if a current tribe occupying a place wants to change the name of a place that was named for previous occupants? Again, there are no criteria and history could be lost. What if one tribe wants to change a name because of hostilities present or past of another tribe? What if a tribe wants to change a name when there is no evidence of prior occupancy just that they had their own name for a place? Will names always be changed from one Indian name to another? What will the criteria be? Will names be changed to anglo names? Isn't that whitewashing? In one area we have sports names meant to honor bravery and courage of American Indians and to keep their history alive eradicated and other times we want anglo names changed to American Indian names. This is madness. Is there a mechanism to find out if a tribe/group has a majority and consensus? What happens when a place is now part of private property? What about the rights of the property owner?

There is no funding for this bill. How will the committee be funded? There are inherent costs in holding meetings, i.e. communication to all those involved etc. Who become arbiters if two or more different groups apply for changes? What are the criteria for the arbiters to decide? What if the name change involves two or more governmental jurisdictions such as two counties, or mix of Federal and State or two States etc.? Not to mention the cost to change a name - signage - maps- brochures- etc. There are huge costs associated with name changes. Yet no analysis of this is offered. Eventually the tax payer would be on the hook. There are many critical issues that would be a better use of use my money. Better education of our American Indian Heritage would be a good place to start.

One of the biggest problems historians have is documenting name changes to understand what happened where? When history is erased and names removed we are left without root or branch and society is destroyed. This bill while couched as progress is really legislation, which is not based on a positive forward and will in the end accomplish nothing. There are so many loopholes it becomes a quagmire of legal and political conflicts that could go on and on and on.

In the end, local people will still use the name that they know and respect. A committee will not change that and the time and effort to force change this way is useless.

Vote NO on this absurd legislation and spend the time, energy, resources and taxpayer dollars on legislation that can really improve the lives of all the people of UTAH.

Winston Churchill said it best - "When we quarrel with the past we lose our future."

Sincerely yours,

Andrea Shirts Nelson

713-542-2197