



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on July 23, 2025

Trump Demands That Washington's NFL Team Change Its Name Back to "Redskins"

President Donald Trump's demand that the professional football team in Washington, D.C., change its name from "Commanders" back to its original name of "Redskins" has been rebuffed by the present team owner, Josh Harris. But Phil Mendelson — the district's council chairman — told a local radio broadcast that he had "no problem" with reverting back to "Redskins."

"Redskins" to "Commanders"

Previous owner Daniel Snyder fought against calls for the team to change its name from "Redskins." However, after the race riots of the summer of 2020 following the death of George Floyd, an African-American, while in the hands of Minneapolis police, he chose to use the name "[Football Team](#)." He then opted to sell the team. Harris, the new owner, bowed to the demands of a name change, choosing the name "Commanders."

Harris continues to defend the name change. Speaking on Fox News in April, Harris [told](#) Bret Baier, "The Commanders' name actually has taken on an amazing kind of element in our building."

What precipitated the current discussion about the name change is the impending move of the team back inside the Beltway, with a new stadium. Trump has threatened to block the move unless the team reinstates the name "Redskins." "I won't make a deal for them to build a Stadium in Washington," Trump wrote on his platform Truth Social. "The Team would be much more valuable, and the Deal would be exciting for everyone."

Many question whether the president has any authority to dictate a mascot name for a professional sports team, even in the seat of government where Trump is the chief executive. (While D.C. is regularly referred to today as the "nation's capital," such was not the case in the early years of the Republic, as "capital" implied the central government was the "head" of the states. This would have been opposed by those who understood the Constitution had established a federal, not a unitary system of government.)

Is "Redskins" Offensive?

The name change is part of an effort to appease some in the Native American community who regard the use of Indian names as offensive. However, it is not clear that the average person with significant indigenous ancestry agrees with that assertion. For example, when the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma



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demanded Florida State University drop the name “Seminoles” from its sports teams, the Seminole Nation of Florida told the Oklahoma Seminoles to mind their own business, as they liked the nickname. Those who oppose its use often hold up the name “Redskins” as among the worst examples of negative stereotyping of American Indians. However, the term actually originated with tribal peoples themselves. They referred to the Europeans as the “whiteskins,” and themselves as the “redskins.”

Some argue that, as animals are often used as mascots (e.g., Tigers, Bears, and Lions), using native names as mascots puts them in the same category as animals. However, if that is the case, then there are scores of other sports teams at the professional, college, and high school level that must likewise consider other human beings as just animals. For example, in college we have the Oklahoma Sooners, the Oklahoma State and Wyoming Cowboys, the Southern California Trojans, the Michigan State Spartans, the Texas Tech Red Raiders, the Texas A&M Aggies, the Nebraska Cornhuskers, the Pennsylvania Quakers, and so on. In professional sports, we have the 49ers, Vikings, Celtics, Packers, and Yankees.

No one seriously believes all those teams have adopted those names as a way of insulting people groups.

What’s Next?

For that matter, should we change the names of scores of states, counties, and cities that likewise use Native American names? What would we do with Indiana and Oklahoma (which means “Red People”)?

At least these names make more sense than the Ohio State Buckeyes. As strong a tradition as Ohio State boasts, who is seriously afraid of a Buckeye?



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