

Mascots Matter, Rep. Ray Reed Introduce Missouri Bill to Ban Discriminatory Disability Mascots

New Missouri bill would ban disability slurs as school mascots, directly impacting Putnam County High School's "Midget" mascot.

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Missouri is one of five states with a 'midget' school mascot. This is our third bill this year, and we're determined to ensure schools uphold disability protections and end slur-based mascots."

Rachel Wherley, Founder & Co-Director, Mascots Matter

[Mascots Matter](#), a national advocacy campaign dedicated to eliminating derogatory and discriminatory mascots, has partnered with Missouri State Representative Ray Reed to introduce the "Prohibition of Discriminatory Disability Mascots Act" ([HB1518](#)). This legislation aims to prohibit the use of mascots, names, and logos in public schools and higher education institutions that are derogatory or representative of individuals or groups based on disability, as defined by the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The Act, which amends chapters 162 and 173 of the Missouri Revised Statutes, establishes clear guidelines for the removal and replacement of discriminatory disability mascots in school districts and public institutions of higher education. Under the legislation, schools must discontinue the use of offensive mascots and imagery, with a three-year transition period to phase out existing materials under specific conditions.

Key Provisions of the Proposed Legislation:

- **Definition of Discriminatory Mascots:** "Discriminatory disability mascot", any name, logo, or mascot that is derogatory or representative of an individual or group based on disability, as defined by the federal Americans with Disabilities Act.
- **Timeline and Transition:** A school district or public school may continue to use uniforms or other materials bearing a discriminatory disability mascot that were purchased on or before the effective date of this section for up to three years, provided that (1) a new, non-discriminatory

mascot is selected, (2) no new uniforms featuring the mascot are purchased, (3) no new printed materials featuring the mascot are produced, and (4) any facility displaying the mascot removes it during the next scheduled renovation, with no new fixtures being built to replace it.

- Effective Date: The proposed effective date is August 25, 2025.

Why This Legislation Matters

Missouri State Representative Ray Reed expressed, “Our schools should be places of learning, growth, and respect. No student should feel ostracized or demeaned by the imagery and language used by their school. This legislation ensures that Missouri moves toward a more inclusive educational environment.”

Rachel Wherley, Founder and Co-Director of Mascots Matter. “Missouri is one of five states where a high school uses [‘midget’](#) as a mascot. This is our third state with a bill this year, and we are determined to ensure all schools uphold disability protections and stop promoting slurs as mascots.”

Shelby Holloway, Co-Director of Mascots Matter, emphasized the importance of legislative action, stating, “Schools should be places of empowerment, not harm. For years, individuals with disabilities have faced stereotypes that diminish their identities. This bill is an essential step toward eliminating those harmful representations and promoting respect for all.”

Erin Elsworth, Co-Director of Mascots Matter, added, “When we started this campaign, we knew we were fighting for more than just a name change—we were advocating for a cultural shift. Representation matters, and this legislation ensures that schools foster environments that respect and uplift all students, rather than perpetuating outdated and offensive imagery.”

An Independent Effort

The Mascots Matter Campaign is a grassroots movement led by adults with dwarfism and parents of children with dwarfism. It is not affiliated with any program or project connected to any national dwarfism organizations.



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