

## **State GOP shows support for Chief**

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SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Republican Party amended its official platform over the weekend to include a section in support of Chief Illiniwek, the embattled mascot of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The new passage was approved at the state convention in Collinsville on May 15, said Stephen McGlynn, co-chairman of the Illinois Republican Party and chairman of the platform and resolution committee.

It was a response to Senate President Emil Jones, D-Chicago, who indicated in late April that the university's budget for the year beginning July 1 could be at risk if the board of trustees did not retire the Chief before the General Assembly adjourns this month, but refused to specify exactly what his threatening comments meant.

McGlynn said the attendees at the convention were outraged by Jones' attempt to influence the board, and the new platform section supporting the Chief "certainly was one of the most popular, if not the most popular parts of the platform," receiving resounding applause.

The platform states the official position of the Republican Party on important issues of the day, and also states the philosophies and priorities of the party, McGlynn said.

"We could have done it by a simple resolution, but we wanted to make a very strong statement that this is what we believe and this is what we will fight for," he said. "The moment you have the party in power start telling institutions of higher learning that we are going to dictate to you on so many things and hold your funding in the balance on whether or not we like the symbol you use, that's the type of government involvement in education we don't need. And it is elevating political correctness to a breathtaking height."

University of Illinois spokesman Tom Hardy, said the resolution speaks for itself, and is just one of an extensive array of opinions that have been expressed to the board of trustees regarding the Chief.

"The board has heard from many different groups with opinions on all sides of this issue," Hardy said. "This is one more group to be heard from, and the board is going to act in the university's best interest as always. It remains to be seen what they are going to do with this issue."

Despite Jones' request for more immediate action, the board of trustees is not scheduled to meet again until June 17. Trustee Frances Carroll has said she intends to request a vote to retire the Chief at that meeting.

Jones, who met privately with university officials and several trustees on Friday, had no comment on the new portion of the state Republican Party platform, said his spokeswoman, Cindy Davidsmeyer.

Jones considers the symbol a racist mascot, and claims the board of trustees' failure to retire the Chief has created a hostile atmosphere on campus that is affecting students' education.

"He's going to continue to work with the trustees to try to come to an amicable resolution on this issue," Davidsmeyer said on Tuesday.

State Sen. Rick Winkel, R-Urbana, who supports the Chief, said he did not attend the Republican Party convention last weekend, but believes that the mascot is a matter for the board of trustees to decide on its own, without influence from the General Assembly.

Winkel said the platform change was a way for the party to express support for the board at a time when it was being pressured by Jones to retire the Chief.

### **Section added to platform**

The Illinois Republican Party platform added this section on Chief Illiniwek on Saturday:

"The Republican Party of Illinois is proud of the Native-American Heritage of this State, which gives our State its name and many of its rich traditions.

Recently, Democrat Leaders have threatened to cut funding to one of the nations' finest schools, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, unless it disavows and eliminates a proud symbol of the school, Chief Illiniwek. This shameless effort to foment racial dissension by the Democrat Leadership is deplorable. Threatening school funding unless the University, its proud students and Alumni, sacrifice Chief Illiniwek upon the altar of political correctness, is unconscionable.

The University is to be commended for its sincere efforts to assure that the Chief Illiniwek figure not only demonstrate the dignity and respect for the school he symbolizes, but also for the Native-Americans he portrays. The proud and dignified symbol of an excellent Institution of Higher Learning should not be denigrated.

We trust the University, its students and Alumni to continue to present Chief Illiniwek as a proud and dignified symbol of the University."

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