



Sac & Fox Nation
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SENATE BILL 429 NATIVE REGALIA BILL VETO BY GOVERNOR STITT

I am writing to express my concern about Senate Bill 429 and its impact on the rights of our Native American students to wear graduation regalia. As you may be aware, Native American students are often subjected to harassment and bullying throughout their school years. In addition, school administration staff in rural areas sometimes display prejudice towards the cultural beliefs of these students, which creates a hostile school experience for them. This kind of discrimination limits the identity of Native American students and can contribute to the high suicide rate among them. Native youth suicide rate is 2.5 times higher than the overall national average, making these rates the highest across all ethnic and racial groups. Cultural disconnection, alienation, and pressure to assimilate all contribute to higher rates of suicide among American Indians and Alaska Natives.

By not allowing Native American students to wear graduation regalia that honors their cultural heritage, the State of Oklahoma is further marginalizing these students and denying them their basic rights. This is especially troubling given the already difficult circumstances that Native American students face in our schools. It sends a message that their cultural identity is not valued or respected.

As the Director of Education Department for the Sac and Fox Nation of Oklahoma and a former tribal leader in Oklahoma, it is clear that the Governor of Oklahoma is unwillingly to approve of any Native American matters. He has demonstrated a consistent pattern of opposition to Indian interests, including regarding governmental jurisdiction, taxation, gaming, and tobacco compacts, Indian child welfare, and now tribal regalia for graduation ceremonies.

We need to get Senate Bill 429 to be overridden the veto and be back on the floor.

Thank you,

Edwina Butler-Wolfe
Director of Education
Sac and Fox Nation