



Hundredth Legislature - Second Session - 2008
Introducer's Statement of Intent
LR 223

Chairperson: Ray Aguilar
Committee: Government, Military and Veterans Affairs
Date of Hearing: February 6, 2008

The following constitutes the reasons for this resolution and the purposes which are sought to be accomplished thereby:

This resolution is intended to express the desire and support of the Nebraska Legislature for placing Chief Standing Bear on the reverse of the redesigned Sacagawea dollar coin. This year is the 100th Anniversary of Chief Standing Bear's death.

The United States Treasury and the United States Mint are currently in the process of selecting designs for the reverse of the Sacagawea dollar coin that depicts images in commemoration of Native Americans and important contributions made by Indian tribes and individual Native Americans to the development and history of the United States.

The role Chief Standing Bear played in advancing civil rights in this country deserves our utmost respect, appreciation, and recognition. Chief Standing Bear was born in Nebraska around 1834. In January 1879, Chief Standing Bear and a group of about 30 Native Americans left Indian Territory in Oklahoma to return to Nebraska to honor the wish of his dying son – to be buried on the Ponca ancestral homeland along the Niobrara River. Chief Standing Bear was consequently imprisoned at Fort Omaha, which resulted in the trial of Standing Bear vs. Crook.

The case of Standing Bear vs. Crook was an important development in the history of Indian-white relations and was a catalyst for far-reaching changes in federal policy affecting thousands of Native Americans throughout the United States. This case stands for the propositions “that an Indian is a person within the meaning of the laws of the United States, and has therefore the right to sue out a writ of habeas corpus in a federal court and before a federal judge, in all cases where he may be confined, or in custody under color of authority of the United States, or where he is restrained of liberty in violation of the constitution or laws of the United States,” and “that the Indians possess the inherent right of expatriation as well as the more fortunate white race, and the inalienable right to ‘life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness’ so long as they obey the laws and do not trespass on forbidden ground.”

When Standing Bear addressed the court, he held out his hand and spoke these words: ***“This hand is not the color of yours, but if I pierce it, I shall feel pain. If you pierce your hand, you also feel pain. The blood that will flow from mine will be the same color as yours ... God made us both.”***

The State of Nebraska has honored the legacy of Chief Standing Bear on numerous occasions. On Feb 29, 1980, Chief Standing Bear was honored by the dedication of his bust into the Nebraska Hall of Fame. Nebraska declared May 12, 2005, to be Chief Standing Bear Day. An image depicting Chief Standing Bear was also a finalist on the redesigned 2006 Nebraska quarter. If not for the determination and achievement of Standing Bear, many of the basic legal assumptions of the United States would not have been changed.

Chief Standing Bear's legacy deserves national recognition and appreciation for his contributions to human and civil rights in the United States. Therefore, this resolution was introduced in the Nebraska Legislature to encourage the United States Department of the Treasury and the United States Mint to select Chief Standing Bear as one of the Native Americans to be depicted on the reverse of the redesigned Sacagawea dollar coin.

Principal Introducer:

Senator Bill Avery