

# California Legislature

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Contact: Ashley Labar  
Office: (916) 319-2058  
Cell: (925) 719-1298

## Ramos and Cristina Garcia introduce legislation to ban use of 'S-word' as geographic name in California

SACRAMENTO—A bill to prohibit the use of the word “squaw” for geographic features and place names in California by January 1, 2024 has been introduced by Assemblymembers James C. Ramos (D-Highland), the first California Native American elected to the state legislature and Cristina Garcia (D-Bell Gardens), chair of the California Legislative Women’s Caucus.

“AB 2022 would ban the use of the S-word and establish a process for renaming locations with that offensive racial and sexist term which began as derogatory word used against Native American women. It is an idiom that came into use during the westward expansion of America, and it is not a tribal word. For decades, Native Americans have argued against the designation’s use because behind that expression is the disparagement of Native women that contributes to the crisis of missing and murdered people in our community,” Ramos stated.

Ramos added that more than 100 places in California contain the S-word. The United States Department of the Interior has [ordered the term](#) “erased from the National landscape and forever replaced” on the almost 700 sites using the name on federal lands. Montana, Oregon, Maine and Minnesota have already banned the word’s use.

Garcia commented, “The sad reality is that this term has been used for generations and normalized, even though it is a misogynistic and racist term rooted in the oppression and belittling of Indigenous women. AB 2022 begins to correct an ugly and painful part of our history by removing it from California’s landmarks; it’s the least we can do to help our indigenous women heal.”

AB 2022 defines a geographic feature as any location or publicly owned structure in the state such as navigable water, parks, local roads, bridges and publicly owned buildings. A place is defined in the proposal as a natural geographic feature or street, alley, or other road within the jurisdiction of the state or political subdivision of the state.

State and local government bodies shall identify geographic features and place names within their jurisdictions and report those locations or features to the California Advisory Committee on Geographic Names. The Committee would be charged with working with those bodies and the Native American Heritage Commission to recommend replacement names.

AB 2022 is sponsored by the American Civil Liberties Union CA.

*Assemblymember Cristina Garcia proudly represents the 58th Assembly District which includes the cities of Montebello, Pico Rivera, Commerce, Bell Gardens, Downey, Norwalk, Bellflower, Cerritos and Artesia.*

*Assemblymember James Ramos proudly represents the 40<sup>th</sup> Assembly district which includes Highland, Loma Linda, Mentone, Rancho Cucamonga, Redlands, and San Bernardino. He is the first and only California Native American serving in the state's legislature.*

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