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ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

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September 10, 2014

Mr. Roger Goodell  
Commissioner  
National Football League  
345 Park Avenue  
New York, NY 10154

Dear Commissioner Goodell:

We write concerning the important issue of domestic violence, which unfortunately impacts every level of our society, and which we must find ways to combat comprehensively. Our professional sports leagues are important economic and cultural institutions in the United States and we are interested in the manner in which these leagues handle incidents of domestic violence by their players, owners, and other employees. We believe that these high-profile professional leagues are, in many ways, in a position of public trust and should be at the forefront of handling such incidents appropriately.

With this year marking the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the enactment of the Violence Against Women Act, we all recognize that this issue requires strengthened and sustained efforts by individuals, organizations, and government. Of course, we are particularly concerned about information that has come to light about the perpetration of domestic violence by one of the NFL's players, Ray Rice, against his then-fiancé, Janay Palmer, in an elevator at the Revel Casino in Atlantic City, New Jersey on February 15, 2014.

Given the important role the NFL and the other major professional sports leagues can play in shaping public perceptions concerning domestic violence, it would appear to be in the public interest to have the highest level of transparency associated with reviews of potential misconduct.

Thus for example, while we understand that you have stated in an interview yesterday on behalf of the NFL that, "We assumed that there was a video, we asked for the video, we asked for anything that was pertinent, but we were never granted that opportunity," to our knowledge the public has not been informed as to specifically how and in what context the request was made, and specifically how relevant law enforcement responded. Nor has there been a full explanation as to whether the video was requested of others, such as Mr. Rice's attorney or the casino where the incident occurred (and if not, why not), or whether any employees, agents, or

consultants of the league or any of its teams outside of your office had access to the video prior to September 8. We therefore urge greater transparency and explanations on these matters.

We welcome your recent willingness to change the NFL's policies regarding issues of domestic violence, and we also believe other major professional sports leagues should consider making their policies public and reviews transparent as well. We look forward to working with you and all of the major professional sports leagues so that we can all participate in the effort to reduce incidents of domestic violence, increase transparency in their review, and better respond to those cases that unfortunately do occur.

Sincerely,

John Longmire

Judy Chu

Joe Lopy

Chris V. Costello

Hank Johnson

Arnold Nadler

Sheila Jackson Lee

Angus D. King

Steve Lohar

V. I. ...

Karen Bass

Harjo

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cc: The Honorable Bob Goodlatte  
Chairman, House Committee on the Judiciary

Mr. Gary Bettman  
Commissioner, National Hockey League

Mr. Don Garber  
Commissioner, Major League Soccer

Mr. Bud Selig  
Commissioner, Major League Baseball

Mr. Adam Silver  
Commissioner, National Basketball Association