

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION
BANKING, HOUSING, AND
URBAN AFFAIRS
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

September 10, 2014

Mr. Roger Goodell
Commissioner
National Football League
280 Park Avenue, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10017

Dear Commissioner Goodell:

As Ranking Member of the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, Product Safety and Insurance with jurisdiction over the National Football League (NFL), I write to you today in regard to the NFL's actions in response to the acts of domestic violence conducted by former Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice.

As a father of two daughters, protecting women from domestic violence has been, and will always be, one of my top priorities in Congress. The prevalence of abuse of women, whether physical, sexual, or psychological, is something that simply cannot be tolerated in our society. It is why I was proud to cosponsor and support the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, which was signed into law in 2013 to provide critical support and services for survivors of domestic violence and to hold abusers accountable. It is also why I have worked with members on both sides of the aisle to introduce the Campus Accountability and Safety Act to address the problem of sexual assaults on our nation's college campuses.

According to the Department of Justice, it is estimated that there are 960,000 reported cases of domestic violence each year. Eighty-five percent of the victims are female and twenty-five percent of women experience domestic violence during their life. It is a social epidemic that lives in the worst corners of society and public leaders in positions such as yours as Commissioner of the NFL must be vigilant when situations arise within your organization to be a leader to stop crimes against women.

After viewing both the shocking video and your interview on broadcast television, I am extremely concerned given the resources of the NFL that not one person within your organization knew anything about the existence of the elevator video before it surfaced on September 8th. The security of the NFL is first rate and your qualified security professionals hold those positions due in part to their ability to obtain facts quickly and accurately through their expansive network.

I fear the failure of the NFL to understand the scope and severity of this act of domestic violence has already led to significant damage for vulnerable members of society. Moreover, I am highly disappointed the NFL's reaction was only heightened once the public witnessed the elevator video. By waiting to act until it was made public you effectively condoned the action of the

perpetrator himself. I cannot and will not tolerate that position by anybody let alone the National Football League.

This incident of domestic violence is not limited to just Ray Rice, rather I believe it is indicative of a larger pattern within the NFL. Currently, Greg Hardy, a defensive end for the Carolina Panthers is eligible to play for the team while his appeal on the conviction for assaulting his former girlfriend and threatening to kill her is pending.

In addition, according to press reports, since 2000, 85 of the 713 arrest of NFL players have been domestic violence accounts. Until last month, the punishments typically were a suspension for one or two games, lacking consistency for the violation committed. While the NFL did adopt new standards of punishment for domestic assault, I am now uncertain whether your role as the sole decider on punishment by the League provides the necessary transparency to properly hold those associated with the NFL accountable for acts of domestic violence.

That is why I am requesting that you provide a detailed response to the following:

- 1) Please provide me a detailed explanation regarding your actions in response to the acts of domestic violence conducted by former Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice.
- 2) Please provide all information regarding whether anyone in the NFL knew about the elevator video, if so, when did they know, who did they tell and why did it not get to you.
- 3) Please provide your process for determining whether a player has violated NFL rules and is subject to suspension when arrested for domestic violence.
- 4) Please outline your plans to address the harm your league has inflicted on survivors of domestic violence going forward.

The answers to these questions will be of great assistance as I continue to follow the actions of the NFL and your stewardship to hold your league to a standard that the American public expects.

Thank you and I appreciate your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



DEAN HELLER
U.S. Senator