



NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

ROGER GOODELL
Commissioner

October 1, 2014

The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.
U.S. House of Representatives
2426 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Ranking Member Conyers,

I received your letter of September 10th regarding the response of the National Football League to the domestic violence incident involving Ray Rice. I appreciate your interest in the league's investigatory process preceding my decision to suspend Mr. Rice, and I would like to provide an update on the steps we have taken to improve our investigatory and disciplinary process as well as our recent actions to address domestic violence and sexual assault.

The NFL at its best sets an example and projects important values that have a positive impact on our society well beyond professional football. However, as I previously have stated, the league's handling of the Ray Rice matter fell short in meeting that goal, and I take full responsibility for that. I since have taken steps to improve our practices and to ensure that our actions in the future properly reflect and reaffirm our values. These steps are based on a clear, simple principle: domestic violence and sexual assault are wrong, illegal, and unacceptable, under any circumstances.

As I announced earlier this month, former FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III, will conduct an independent investigation into the NFL's pursuit and handling of evidence in the Rice domestic violence incident. This examination reflects our commitment to establish the facts and respond to questions about our process. Mr. Mueller will have the full cooperation of all NFL personnel and access to all NFL records. Once the investigation is completed, a final report will be made public. I look forward to Mr. Mueller's report and will act swiftly to correct any shortcomings that he may identify so that any missteps in our process will not be repeated.

Meanwhile, the league has engaged with nationally recognized experts to help review, shape, and enhance the league's policies and programs related to domestic violence and sexual assault, from evaluation, to intervention, to stronger penalties.

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This group of experts includes Lisa Friel, Peter Harvey, Tony Porter, Jane Randel, and Rita Smith. Ms. Friel previously served as the head of the Sex Crimes Prosecution Unit in the New York County District Attorney's Office for more than a decade. Mr. Harvey served as the Attorney General of New Jersey and thoroughly revised the state's approach to these offenses. Mr. Porter is an author, an internationally recognized advocate of ending violence against women and promoting healthy, respectful manhood, and the co-founder and co-director of A CALL TO MEN: The Next Generation of Manhood. Ms. Randel is the co-founder of NO MORE, a national initiative to raise awareness and understanding of domestic violence and sexual assault. Ms. Smith is the former executive director of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. We expect to identify and add additional experts to our team in the coming weeks and months.

We already have provided all league and team personnel with information about resources available in their communities to address incidents of domestic violence and sexual assault. These resources are both through and independent of the NFL and individual NFL clubs.

In addition, the outside experts listed above also have helped us to develop a comprehensive educational program related to domestic violence and sexual assault, which we are reviewing with the NFL Players Association and will begin presenting to all NFL personnel within 30 days. This education will be mandatory for players and coaches, management and administrative personnel, and also available to families and significant others. Apart from general education on these subjects, we will provide specialized training for appropriate personnel to identify those at risk and provide prompt and confidential counseling and other intervention. This will include making sure that all spouses and significant others are aware of the confidential assistance available through clubs, the NFL, or independent local resources. As you know from your work on this issue, a critical step is to encourage victims and abusers to seek assistance early, and the availability of private, confidential intervention is an important resource. Where an incident is reported, we will work to provide confidential support for victims and families.

And where people involved in the NFL engage in unacceptable conduct, we will strongly condemn and punish that behavior. As announced in my August 28 letter to the team owners, I have implemented enhanced disciplinary consequences for violations of the league's Personal Conduct Policy that include domestic violence and sexual assault.

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The new sanctions include banishment from the league. We now are engaged in a comprehensive review of our Personal Conduct Policy and are exploring a wide range of issues relating to the investigation, assessment, and punishment of violations; professional assistance to employees, their families, and victims of domestic violence or sexual assault; and early intervention programs that seek to prevent these incidents from occurring in the first place.

In undertaking this review, I am seeking advice and information from a wide range of sources and will work closely with the NFL Players Association and its leadership on issues affecting NFL players. My goal will be to ensure that the league implements the most effective balance of evaluation, treatment, family support, and punishment; that we have full information on best practices; and that we share our own work with others to elevate the level of response to these crimes. In addition, I am establishing a new committee that will regularly review and update all of the league's current rules, policies, and procedures related to the conduct of club personnel, owners, and players. This conduct committee will work to ensure that the league maintains clear and current rules, fair and transparent procedures, and the highest standards.

In addition, the league will expand the educational components in our college, high school, and youth football programs that address domestic violence and sexual assault. We will create and promote programs that develop the character of the young men who play, coach, or manage the game, emphasizing respect for others, including women, and appropriate ways to resolve conflict. We also will incorporate domestic violence and sexual assault awareness into our public service work. We recognize that domestic violence and sexual assault are broad social issues, affecting millions of people from all backgrounds and walks of life. We want our public role to be constructive, effective, and far-reaching.

Moreover, as you may know, the League recently pledged to provide financial, operational, and promotional support during the next five years to the National Domestic Violence Hotline (the Hotline), and to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC). The Hotline is a critical service for victims nationwide, and the resources we provide will be used to help ensure that every incoming phone call and text message is answered promptly. Already the Hotline is in the process of hiring an additional 20 full-time advocates, which will permit it to serve as many as 800 additional callers each day. Similarly, our support for NSVRC will increase the capacity of state and local sexual assault hotlines across the country.

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These steps are by no means the end of our work. We will continue to engage with experts and advocates to expand and develop long-term programs that raise awareness, educate, and reduce domestic violence and sexual assault both within the NFL and in our society. We recognize that domestic violence and sexual assault are serious issues that we cannot solve by ourselves. But we are committed to doing our part to make a positive and significant difference.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roger Goodell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "R".

ROGER GOODELL

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