

JACKIE SPEIER  
14TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-0514**

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
SUBCOMMITTEES:  
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SUBCOMMITTEES:  
RANKING MEMBER, ENERGY POLICY, HEALTH CARE,  
AND ENTITLEMENTS  
NATIONAL SECURITY  
GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION  
TASK FORCE  
Vice Chair

September 25, 2014

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

Dear Commissioner Goodell:

Over the last month, high-profile cases of domestic violence committed by National Football League (NFL) players have brought this terrible crime back into the American consciousness. It has become clear that the NFL treats domestic violence perpetrated by its players in an inconsistent and grossly inadequate manner.

While we understand that former FBI director Robert Mueller is currently leading an investigation into the NFL's treatment of the Ray Rice case, the NFL should not wait until the investigation is complete – or the Superbowl – to act. Three new cases of domestic violence have already occurred since Ray Rice's first suspension, and a number of gaps and inconsistencies in NFL policies have already been identified.

Since you took over as commissioner in 2006, 57 players have been arrested for domestic violence, but the NFL has only suspended these players for a combined 13 games. Their punishments ranged from short suspensions to conditional fines to no punishment at all.

Part of this inconsistency is rooted in a lack of standard procedures. To establish a standardized and serious policy, the NFL should not allow players to play while under investigation or appealing a conviction until a preponderance of evidence determines their guilt or innocence. A possible method to do this would be to place them on the exemption list. This suspension should continue until the end of court proceedings, allowing due process to take its course, at which time the NFL can apply its policy for someone guilty of domestic violence.

Allowing individuals to continue to play during an investigation sends a signal to players that coaches and owners do not take these offenses seriously. It is also inappropriate and inconsistent with how many organizations in the public and private sector handle similar situations, including police officers. When an officer is arrested for domestic violence the

police department immediately suspends the officer, and holds a disciplinary hearing to see if their case meets the preponderance of evidence standard. The suspension either continues until criminal proceedings end, or ends if there is a lack of evidence.

As you have said, NFL players should be “held to a higher standard, and properly so”. These athletes are role models for millions of children. Stronger policies will show, as you have said, that “domestic violence and sexual assault... have no place in the NFL and are unacceptable in any way, under any circumstances.” Implementing this procedure would also force owners and coaches to take these crimes more seriously and will incent them to actively prevent these crimes from occurring.

We deserve sports that reflect the best in our society, on and off the field. I will look forward to your response.

All the best,



Jackie Speier

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Vice Chair

September 25, 2014

Jerry Richardson & Dave Gettleman  
Owner & General Manager  
Carolina Panthers  
800 South Mint Street,  
Charlotte, NC 28202

Dear Mr. Richardson and Mr. Gettleman:

Over the last month, high-profile cases of domestic violence committed by National Football League (NFL) players, including on your team, have brought this terrible crime back into the American consciousness. It has become clear that the NFL treats domestic violence perpetrated by its players in an inconsistent and grossly inadequate manner.

While we understand that former FBI director Robert Mueller is currently leading an investigation into the NFL's treatment of the Ray Rice case, teams should not wait until the investigation is complete to act. Three new cases of domestic violence have already occurred since Ray Rice's first suspension, and a number of gaps and inconsistencies in NFL policies have already been identified.

Since Roger Goodell took over as commissioner in 2006, 57 players have been arrested for domestic violence, but the NFL has only suspended these players for a combined 13 games. Their punishments ranged from short suspensions to conditional fines to no punishment at all. In comparison, teams have suspended or terminated contracts in more than a dozen of these cases. Responses are vastly inconsistent from team to team, but this data shows that teams can provide a model for treating domestic violence perpetrated by players.

This inconsistency between teams has been highlighted with 5 recent cases: Ray Rice, Greg Hardy, Ray McDonald, Adrian Peterson, and Jonathan Dwyer. As a team, you should immediately improve and standardize your response to players under investigation or appealing a conviction from playing in sanctioned games.

One method to change your policy would be to prevent players while under investigation or appealing a conviction until a preponderance of evidence determines their guilt or innocence. A possible method to do this would be to place them on the exemption list.

This suspension should continue until the end of court proceedings, allowing due process to take its course, at which time the NFL can apply its policy for someone guilty of domestic violence.

Allowing individuals to continue to play during an investigation sends a signal to players that your team does not take these offenses seriously. It is also inappropriate and inconsistent with how many organizations in the public and private sector handle similar situations, including police officers. When an officer is arrested for domestic violence the police department immediately suspends the officer, and holds a disciplinary hearing to see if their case meets the preponderance of evidence standard. The suspension either continues until criminal proceedings end, or ends if there is a lack of evidence.

I would like to bring to your attention the case of Greg Hardy, a player on your team who was arrested for domestic violence. He was arrested and convicted in a bench trial this summer assaulting his former girlfriend and threatening to kill her. She said Hardy picked her up, choked her, threw her onto a couch covered in assault rifles and shotguns, and bragged that they were loaded. He is currently appealing this decision. Despite this ongoing process, he played in the first week. I am encouraged that he has since been placed on the exemption list – this should have been your action in the first place. I hope that you will continue to hold him on the exempt list until this legal process finishes, and your team will make this standard practice in the future.

By standardizing these practices, your team can take a leadership role in preventing domestic violence. We deserve sports that reflect the best in our society, on and off the field. I will look forward to your response.

All the best,



Jackie Speier

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Vice Chair

September 25, 2014

Steve Bisciotti & Ozzie Newsome  
Baltimore Ravens  
Owner & General Manager  
1 Winning Drive  
Owings Mills, MD 21117

Dear Mr. Bisciotti and Mr. Newsome:

Over the last month, high-profile cases of domestic violence committed by National Football League (NFL) players, including on your team, have brought this terrible crime back into the American consciousness. It has become clear that the NFL treats domestic violence perpetrated by its players in an inconsistent and grossly inadequate manner.

While we understand that former FBI director Robert Mueller is currently leading an investigation into the NFL's treatment of the Ray Rice case, teams should not wait until the investigation is complete to act. Three new cases of domestic violence have already occurred since Ray Rice's first suspension, and a number of gaps and inconsistencies in NFL policies have already been identified.

Since Roger Goodell took over as commissioner in 2006, 57 players have been arrested for domestic violence, but the NFL has only suspended these players for a combined 13 games. Their punishments ranged from short suspensions to conditional fines to no punishment at all. In comparison, teams have suspended or terminated contracts in more than a dozen of these cases. Responses are vastly inconsistent from team to team, but this data shows that teams can provide a model for treating domestic violence perpetrated by players.

This inconsistency between teams has been highlighted with 5 recent cases: Ray Rice, Greg Hardy, Ray McDonald, Adrian Peterson, and Jonathan Dwyer. As a team, you should immediately improve and standardize your response to players under investigation or appealing a conviction from playing in sanctioned games.

One method to change your policy would be to prevent players while under investigation or appealing a conviction until a preponderance of evidence determines their guilt or innocence. A possible method to do this would be to place them on the exemption list.

This suspension should continue until the end of court proceedings, allowing due process to take its course, at which time the NFL can apply its policy for someone guilty of domestic violence.

Allowing individuals to continue to play during an investigation sends a signal to players that your team does not take these offenses seriously. It is also inappropriate and inconsistent with how many organizations in the public and private sector handle similar situations, including police officers. When an officer is arrested for domestic violence the police department immediately suspends the officer, and holds a disciplinary hearing to see if their case meets the preponderance of evidence standard. The suspension either continues until criminal proceedings end, or ends if there is a lack of evidence.

I would like to bring to your attention the case of Ray Rice, a player on your team who was arrested for domestic violence. Rice was indicted in March for assaulting his then fiancée. In the released video, he knocked his fiancée unconscious with a single punch, dragging her body out of the elevator. I am disgusted that it took two videos to get any sort of punishment from your organization, when all these videos did was confirm what domestic violence looks like. Your inaction is symptomatic of the greater failures of the NFL at large to take domestic violence seriously. In future cases, you should immediately suspend the player as they undergo legal proceedings, and follow through with a consistent punishment should those charges be confirmed.

By standardizing these practices, your team can take a leadership role in preventing domestic violence. We deserve sports that reflect the best in our society, on and off the field. I will look forward to your response.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jackie Speier". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jackie Speier

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Vice Chair

September 25, 2014

Zygi Wilf & Rick Spielman  
Owner & General Manager  
Minnesota Vikings  
9520 Viking Drive  
Eden Prairie, MN 55344

Dear Mr. Wilf and Mr. Spielman:

Over the last month, high-profile cases of domestic violence committed by National Football League (NFL) players, including on your team, have brought this terrible crime back into the American consciousness. It has become clear that the NFL treats domestic violence perpetrated by its players in an inconsistent and grossly inadequate manner.

While we understand that former FBI director Robert Mueller is currently leading an investigation into the NFL's treatment of the Ray Rice case, teams should not wait until the investigation is complete to act. Three new cases of domestic violence have already occurred since Ray Rice's first suspension, and a number of gaps and inconsistencies in NFL policies have already been identified.

Since Roger Goodell took over as commissioner in 2006, 57 players have been arrested for domestic violence, but the NFL has only suspended these players for a combined 13 games. Their punishments ranged from short suspensions to conditional fines to no punishment at all. In comparison, teams have suspended or terminated contracts in more than a dozen of these cases. Responses are vastly inconsistent from team to team, but this data shows that teams can provide a model for treating domestic violence perpetrated by players.

This inconsistency between teams has been highlighted with 5 recent cases: Ray Rice, Greg Hardy, Ray McDonald, Adrian Peterson, and Jonathan Dwyer. As a team, you should immediately improve and standardize your response to players under investigation or appealing a conviction from playing in sanctioned games.

One method to change your policy would be to prevent players while under investigation or appealing a conviction until a preponderance of evidence determines their guilt or innocence. A possible method to do this would be to place them on the exemption list.

This suspension should continue until the end of court proceedings, allowing due process to take its course, at which time the NFL can apply its policy for someone guilty of domestic violence.

Allowing individuals to continue to play during an investigation sends a signal to players that your team does not take these offenses seriously. It is also inappropriate and inconsistent with how many organizations in the public and private sector handle similar situations, including police officers. When an officer is arrested for domestic violence the police department immediately suspends the officer, and holds a disciplinary hearing to see if their case meets the preponderance of evidence standard. The suspension either continues until criminal proceedings end, or ends if there is a lack of evidence.

I would like to bring to your attention the case of Adrian Peterson, a player on your team who was arrested for domestic violence. He was indicted for beating his 4 year old with a tree branch until he bled from cuts on his legs and thighs. After suspending him for one game, your team reactivated him. Soon after, further allegations of child abuse surfaced and you placed him on the exemption list. This indefinite suspension should have been your action in the first place. I hope that you will continue to hold him on the exempt list until this legal process finishes, and your team will make this standard practice in the future.

By standardizing these practices, your team can take a leadership role in preventing domestic violence. We deserve sports that reflect the best in our society, on and off the field. I will look forward to your response.

All the best,



Jackie Speier

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TASK FORCE

Vice Chair

September 25, 2014

Bill Bidwill & Steve Keim  
Owner/Chairman & General Manager  
Arizona Cardinals  
8701 S Hardy Drive,  
Tempe, Arizona 85284

Dear Mr. Bidwill and Mr. Keim:

Over the last month, high-profile cases of domestic violence committed by National Football League (NFL) players, including on your team, have brought this terrible crime back into the American consciousness. It has become clear that the NFL treats domestic violence perpetrated by its players in an inconsistent and grossly inadequate manner.

While we understand that former FBI director Robert Mueller is currently leading an investigation into the NFL's treatment of the Ray Rice case, teams should not wait until the investigation is complete to act. Three new cases of domestic violence have already occurred since Ray Rice's first suspension, and a number of gaps and inconsistencies in NFL policies have already been identified.

Since Roger Goodell took over as commissioner in 2006, 57 players have been arrested for domestic violence, but the NFL has only suspended these players for a combined 13 games. Their punishments ranged from short suspensions to conditional fines to no punishment at all. In comparison, teams have suspended or terminated contracts in more than a dozen of these cases. Responses are vastly inconsistent from team to team, but this data shows that teams can provide a model for treating domestic violence perpetrated by players.

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One method to change your policy would be to prevent players while under investigation or appealing a conviction until a preponderance of evidence determines their guilt or innocence. A possible method to do this would be to place them on the exemption list.

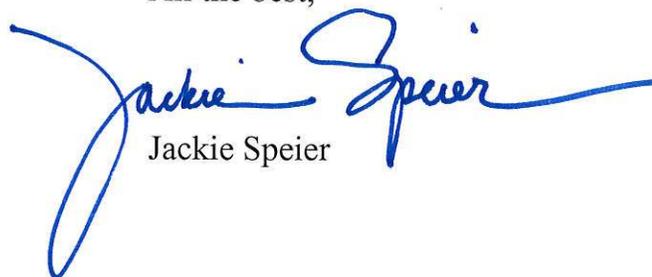
This suspension should continue until the end of court proceedings, allowing due process to take its course, at which time the NFL can apply its policy for someone guilty of domestic violence.

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I would like to bring to your attention the case of Jonathan Dwyer, a player on your team who was arrested for domestic violence. Dwyer was arrested for head-butting his wife, breaking her nose. I am encouraged that you immediately took action, suspending him indefinitely as he goes through legal proceedings. This is the kind of swift action that should be used throughout the league, and I hope you will work with other teams to implement similar policies as standard.

By standardizing these practices, your team can take a leadership role in preventing domestic violence. We deserve sports that reflect the best in our society, on and off the field. I will look forward to your response.

All the best,



Jackie Speier

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TASK FORCE  
Vice Chair

September 25, 2014

Jed York & Trent Baalke  
CEO & General Manager  
San Francisco 49ers  
4949 Marie P DeBartolo Way  
Santa Clara, CA 95054

Dear Mr. York and Mr. Baalke:

Over the last month, high-profile cases of domestic violence committed by National Football League (NFL) players, including on your team, have brought this terrible crime back into the American consciousness. It has become clear that the NFL treats domestic violence perpetrated by its players in an inconsistent and grossly inadequate manner.

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I would like to bring to your attention the case of Ray McDonald, a player on your team who was arrested for domestic violence. McDonald was arrested at a party at his home. His fiancée, who was 10 weeks pregnant, showed police bruises on her neck and arms. Despite an ongoing investigation into allegations of domestic violence, he has continued to play on the team. This is unacceptable. As an avid 49ers fan, I expect more from my team. I ask that you immediately suspend McDonald with pay until the investigation and legal process plays out, and make this policy standard when dealing with domestic violence allegations.

By standardizing these practices, your team can take a leadership role in preventing domestic violence. We deserve sports that reflect the best in our society, on and off the field. I will look forward to your response.

All the best,



Jackie Speier