

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 30, 2018

Mrs. Virginia Halas McCaskey, Owner
Mr. George McCaskey, Chairman
The Chicago Bears
Halas Hall
1920 Football Drive,
Lake Forest, IL 60045

Dear McCaskey family,

We write today to express concern over National Football League (NFL) owners voting to enact a new national anthem policy for the 2018 season, and would like to inquire as to The Chicago Bears's record on that matter. The new policy – if upheld – would mandate that all players, team and league personnel, who are on the field for the national anthem, stand or be subject to penalty.

As Members of Congress, we proudly swore an oath to defend America's Constitution, and protect our fellow countrymen's First Amendment right to free speech. This right is unalienable, and the right to speak freely on the issues of racial injustice and police brutality is something Chicago Bears players, employees and fans value.

We have the honor of representing the city and state that the Chicago Bears play in. As Chicagoans, we remember how a *Super Bowl Shuffle* brought us together, but we also know how unresolved issues of excessive force in law enforcement tear communities apart. Just last year, the Department of Justice issued a report on Chicago which highlighted these concerns. The Chicago Police Department is currently under a consent decree with the Illinois Attorney General because of prior misconduct. The issue of police brutality and inequality for people of color is the reason that NFL players are using their Constitutional right to free speech and peaceful protest to address this concern.

The only way that the city of Chicago, our state, and this nation can move beyond this problem, is by engaging in a constructive, respectful, representative discourse that helps communities heal by acknowledging injustices and listening to one another's voice. This is not the time to silence the aggrieved.

It is disappointing that your franchise voted to silence the players you employ, during this important national dialogue. The Chicago Bears have a current roster that is 68 percent African American in a league which is 70 percent black. You benefit from the support of so many fans of color who share player concerns on the issue of police brutality. One can argue that there is a time for protest, or that we should keep politics out of football, but did your ownership take into

account the politics that inspired, and social impact that would result from this new anthem policy?

Players who kneel silently in no way hamper the ability of the game to be played, nor do they diminish stadium security, business operations, or quality of gameplay. The Halas-McCaskey family has a storied role in the history of this game, and in American culture.

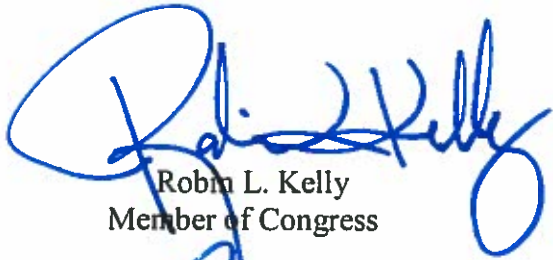
George Halas was one of the first league officials to work to convince NFL coaches to lift the ban on black players in 1939, in his attempt to sign Kenny Washington of UCLA. That was a progressive business stand, and 80 years later, you too have the ability to take a similar progressive business stand.

In closing, we have a few questions for the Chicago Bears ownership on this policy, as well as your intentions to enforce it, and your plans to implement it at the team level. In particular, we would like answers to the following questions:

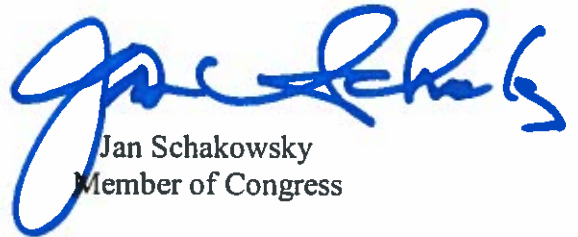
- 1). Did you have knowledge of a vote on the new anthem policy prior to the March 22 owners meeting in Orlando?
- 2). Neither you nor the Chicago Bears have issued a statement regarding your vote in this process. Did you vote to affirm this policy, did you abstain or were you not present at the meeting?
- 3). How do the Chicago Bears plan to implement this policy change at the team level? Will players have advance notice of team-level policy changes before reporting to Training Camp? Do the Chicago Bears plan to incorporate player feedback into crafting the team level policy?
- 4). To date, the NFL's Personal Conduct policy assigns no fine to teams of players who engage in domestic violence, crimes involving firearms, driving under the influence (DUI), illegal drug usage and other crimes. We look forward to your thoughts about whether teams should be assessed a fine for these personal actions in the same way that you have for the expression of free speech during the National Anthem.
- 5). Over the last six decades, the NFL and individual teams have been the beneficiaries of millions in federal taxpayer dollars, in addition to state and local taxpayer dollars for stadium construction and infrastructure. Given the investment of taxpayer dollars, the NFL and its team should be held to the highest possible public standard, especially when it comes to protecting and defending the First Amendment rights on players, employees, and fans. What is the Chicago Bears official policy on free speech?

We respectfully await your response to this inquiry, and welcome the opportunity to engage you in person on the important issues of employee protected speech and safe community policing. Should you have any questions in the interim, please contact Brandon Webb at 202.225.0773.

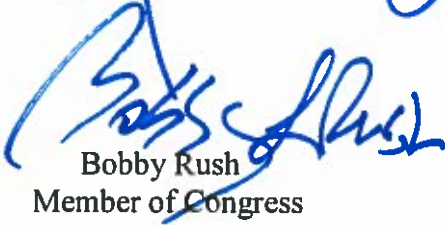
Sincerely,



Robyn L. Kelly
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Bobby Rush
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress