

## NFL May Be Stripped Of Its Tax-Exempt Status

Several U.S. senators have proposed that the NFL should be stripped of its tax-exempt status. Last week, lawmakers introduced bills that threaten to revoke the tax exempt status of the league.

Legislation was unveiled by Sen. Cory Booker, a New Jersey Democrat, to boost funding for domestic violence prevention programs by revoking the NFL's tax exemption status, which is technically a non-profit organization, and nine other [professional sports leagues](#).

A few days later, Sen. Maria Cantwell of Washington, Sen. Harry Reid of Nevada and Sen. Tim Johnson of South Dakota — all Democrats — introduced a measure for eliminating the tax protection status of the league if it continues to support the Washington team name, "Redskins." Reid remarked it is not right that the National Football League continues to denigrate an entire population, while referring to Native Americans generally and the 27 tribes in his state. The Senate majority leader added he wish Roger Goodell and the NFL's leadership team would take a stand. In a statement, Redskins said our position remains consistent with more than 80 percent of Americans who do not want to change the Washington Redskins name.

The bill came as the NFL and its commissioner, Roger Goodell are making efforts for repairing image of the league following the indefinite suspension imposed on former Ravens' running back [Ray Rice](#) for knocking his then-fiancée unconscious in February in an Atlantic City casino elevator. The NFL is also fighting hard to control domestic or child abuse allegations against other players.

Congress has coerced sports leagues for years into action with the threat of removing tax or legal protections. [Major League Baseball](#) increased penalties more than fivefold for a first steroid offense in 2006 after being chastised and embarrassed at public hearings. The MLB also introduced a lifetime ban for a third violation.

University of Richmond law professor Carl Tobias said it is so difficult to have Congress agree on anything. Tobias added threats can still be effective in moving those who are the targets to taking some action. And the NFL, like many others, does not want the adverse publicity. Sports economist Andrew Zimbalist of Smith College remarked it was not the threat of legislation that accelerated steroids reforms. Zimbalist added he does not believe the NFL will be influenced by threats to alter its tax status.

In recent weeks, NFL commissioner Roger Goodell has created a new position for overseeing the social responsibility of the league. Goodell named consultants, all women, for studying domestic violence policies for the league. Rep. Elijah Cummings, a Maryland Democrat who played a vital role in pushing baseball to enact stricter steroids penalties, said he is glad to see the NFL's recent commitment to support organizations fighting domestic violence across the country. Cummings added we must continue to represent the interests of our constituents by holding the NFL's feet to the fire on domestic violence and also remarked given the NFL's

popularity in American culture and the fact that one in four women have been victims of domestic violence, Congress can and should help ensure that the NFL appropriately addresses these incidents.