

JOHN McCAIN
ARIZONA

CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

United States Senate

May 26, 2016

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Adam Silver
Commissioner
National Basketball Association
Olympic Tower
645 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear Commissioner Silver:

I write to you today to ask that, like the National Football League (NFL), you commence a full review of all contracts between National Basketball Association (NBA) teams and the Department of Defense (DOD) to determine if taxpayer funds were used to pay for patriotic displays or other activities honoring the troops at NBA games.

In our joint oversight report *Tackling Paid Patriotism*, Senator Flake and I detailed 18 contracts executed between NBA teams and the DOD between 2012 and 2015 that may have contained some form of paid patriotism.^{1,2} For example, an FY 2013 contract shows that the Georgia Army National Guard paid the Atlanta Hawks to perform color guard ceremonies at three home games, as well as for a feature video presentation recognizing a National Guard soldier. Such examples are a clear misuse of taxpayer dollars.

While I recognize the right of the NBA and its teams to be paid for legitimate marketing and advertising activities, it seems unreasonable to expect American taxpayers to foot the bill in cases where a team or the league wishes to engage in activities that give the appearance of honoring our service members or highlighting the relationship between the NBA, its teams, and the military. Any organization with a genuine interest in honoring the troops, and deriving public credit as a result, should do so at its own expense and not at that of the American taxpayer. I urge you to take steps necessary to ensure that these paid patriotism activities do not continue.

¹ The report defined paid patriotism as color guard ceremonies, flag details, enlistment and reenlistment ceremonies, recognition of troops and/or veterans, game tickets, sponsorship of military appreciation and military night games.

² The 17 contracts may not be comprehensive of all contracts executed during the time period.

Like the NFL, you should consider returning this money or making a donation to the charitable organization of your choice that benefits our service members and veterans in an amount equal or greater to that paid to the teams by the DOD since 2012 for any activity intended to honor service members. I know that the NBA and its teams undertake numerous charitable activities already, but I believe that would be a fitting gesture, given the highly questionable nature of some of the activities that have occurred.

I thank you for your attention to this matter, and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John McCain". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

John McCain
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee