

CONGRESSMAN FRANK PALLONE, JR.
Sixth District of New Jersey

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October 25, 2010

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(202) 225-4671

Pallone Asks World Series Teams to Ban Chewing Tobacco

Washington, D.C. - Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr., Chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee's Health Subcommittee, Monday called on Major League Baseball's American and National League Champions to ban the use of smokeless tobacco on the field and in the dugout during this year's World Series.

"Baseball is considered 'America's Pastime' and the World Series is an historic event that draws the attention of millions of young fans who look-up to the players and coaches," said Pallone. "I'm concerned about the free advertising the tobacco industry receives and, more importantly, the influence this exposure has on young people. The players are role models whose practices can have a real impact that goes beyond their direct use of chewing tobacco."

The request went to the Texas Rangers and the San Francisco Giants.

In 2009, over 19 million people watched the World Series.

In April, Pallone held a hearing to examine the impact of smokeless tobacco use by MLB players on youth. The most recent survey results show 15 percent of high school students are using these products, making them are more likely to develop oral, pancreatic and esophageal cancer.

"This year, baseball has the chance to send a message to young adults that the use of chewing tobacco isn't acceptable," said Pallone

Although the college and minor leagues have banned the use of smokeless tobacco, no such ban has been presented by MLB, Pallone added.

The text of the letters appear below.

October 26, 2010

Mr. Laurence M. Baer
President and Chief Operating Officer
San Francisco Giants
AT&T Park
24 Willie Mays Plaza
San Francisco, CA 94107

Dear Mr. Baer:

Congratulations on becoming Major League Baseball's (MLB) National League Champions. While I am sure that winning four more games is the only thing on your team's mind today, I write to bring a very important public health issue to your attention. As the Chairman of the Health Subcommittee for the House Energy and Commerce Committee, I strongly urge you to ban smokeless tobacco use on the field and in the dugout during play at this year's World Series.

Through the years chewing tobacco has been a popular practice among baseball players, and numerous ex-MLB players have faced cancer or other tobacco-related illnesses. Most recently, the former San Diego Padres player and Baseball Hall of Famer, Tony Gwynn's battle with cancer shows the devastating effects of tobacco on American athletes. Meanwhile, an analysis by researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health found that in just one game of the 2004 World Series, players were observed on television using smokeless tobacco for a total of over nine minutes. This single game provided the equivalent of \$6.4 million worth of free advertising for the smokeless tobacco industry. It is evident that without action by MLB, individual teams will continue to provide free advertising for smokeless tobacco products through their use on national television.

This past April, my Health Subcommittee held a hearing to examine the correlation between smokeless tobacco use by youth and MLB players, in which MLB and the MLB Players Association testified. As countless children see the use of smokeless tobacco on television, it is plausible to assume that they begin to associate the product with baseball - as we all know, the hero phenomenon can have a profound impact on our children.

For that reason, I am concerned that smokeless tobacco may have health risks reaching far beyond the baseball players themselves. Fifteen percent of high school students are using these products, with usage rates increasing 22 percent from 2003-2007. Young adults and teenagers are not getting the message that tobacco products are dangerous, no matter how it enters the body. Meanwhile, evidence continues to suggest the severe dangers of smokeless tobacco, in that its users are 80 percent more likely to develop oral cancer and 60 percent more likely to develop pancreatic and esophageal cancer. Federal health authorities, including the U.S. Surgeon General and the National Cancer Institute, have spoken definitively on the health hazards of smokeless tobacco and continue to show that it is not a safe substitute for traditional cigarettes.

Although the college and minor leagues have banned the use of smokeless tobacco, no such ban has been presented by MLB. During the upcoming collective bargaining agreements, it is critical that you keep America's young adults in mind. You should not only ban the use of tobacco products during the World Series, but I hope you will also support a larger ban for MLB as a whole.

The ban of smokeless tobacco while players are in uniform would be a great service to this country and the health of its citizens. Baseball has long been the American pastime, and has provided generations of inspiration for American youth, it is time that MLB continues this tradition of excellence and takes steps towards a healthier American future.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

FRANK PALLONE, JR.
Member of Congress
Chairman, Health Subcommittee
House Committee on Energy and Commerce

cc: Mr. Allan H. (Bud) Selig, Commissioner, Major League Baseball
Mr. Michael Weiner, Executive Director, Major League Baseball Players Association

October 25, 2010

Mr. Nolan Ryan
President
Texas Rangers
Rangers Ballpark in Arlington
1000 Ballpark Way
Arlington, TX 76011

Dear Mr. Ryan:

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