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June 9, 2020

Mr. Mark Emmert, President
The National Collegiate Athletic Association
700 W. Washington Street
PO Box 6222
Indianapolis, IN 46206-6222

Dear President Emmert:

As your office continues to discuss the future of college athletics amid COVID-19, I hope you will consider these thoughts on the upcoming football season and the effect it has on our economy. College football attracts millions of loyal fans who watch the games on television and fill hundreds of stadiums each season. It brings a sense of camaraderie and pride to college towns across America, unifying even the fiercest rivals through a love of the game. Students and fans alike travel to parts of the country they may not have otherwise known, fostering greater bonds between our fellow Americans.

However, college football also provides something more tangible. Besides generating billions in revenues for schools and providing countless opportunities for students who may not have otherwise been able to afford a higher education, it brings about a much needed economic boost to college town businesses.

Out of the 130 schools with Division I-A football programs alone, almost half are located in small towns with a population below 100,000 and over a quarter below 50,000. Many of these towns heavily rely on the seasonal business that NCAA football facilitates. In the Third District of South Carolina, the town of Clemson has a modest residential population of a little over 17,000, and while the student enrollment brings that number up to around 40,000, for seven days a year, an average of 80,000 football fans, each gameday, come to watch the Tigers play.

From hotels to restaurants, from taxi to bus services, small businesses located near college towns like Clemson struggle during the off-season, and the COVID-19 pandemic has severely exacerbated the lull in business. Even those who were fortunate to receive relief through the CARES Act will find it difficult to stay afloat through the summer without the economic support of the college football season.

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Without the patronage from Tiger football fans and foes alike, there is no telling how many businesses will fold here in the Third District, and the same rings true for football towns across the country.

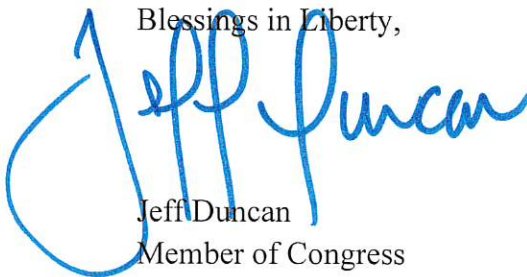
It is understandable that some changes in operation are necessary to accommodate these difficult times. There is no need to sacrifice the health and safety of student athletes and staff; however, it is imperative that the NCAA evaluates measures to keep the 2020 season as scheduled and prevent a handful of schools from dictating the fate of entire conferences based on their own over-prescriptive sensationalism towards the pandemic.

Optimistic data regarding the coronavirus pandemic is being released every day, and the trends are moving in the right direction. As better protocols, prevention, and treatments are developed, the economic impact of our reactions to COVID-19 must not be overlooked. Postponing the 2020 season could have far longer lasting consequences than the pandemic itself.

In the words of Clemson Football Coach Dabo Swinney, “T.I.G.E.R.S.—this is going to end real soon,” and college football may be the catalyst to reopening and reunifying America in a post-COVID-19 environment. States across the country, including South Carolina are already announcing when businesses will be able to reopen – months before the football season kicks off. The timing of the calendar would suggest that college football is uniquely positioned to take advantage of the end of the crisis – bringing Americans back together in groups to celebrate our shared liberty and national identity.

So our message to you is a simple one – We are ready for some football!

Blessings in Liberty,



Jeff Duncan
Member of Congress