

SHERROD BROWN  
OHIO

COMMITTEES:  
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION,  
AND FORESTRY

BANKING, HOUSING,  
AND URBAN AFFAIRS

HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 9, 2010

Mr. Roger Goodell  
Commissioner  
National Football League  
280 Park Avenue  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Commissioner Goodell:

Beginning this week, the Cleveland Browns and Cincinnati Bengals will play their first game of the 2010 NFL regular season. While fans cannot wait for the start of the season, I am concerned that supporters spanning Ohio's small towns and urban cities will be deprived of the chance to watch the Browns and Bengals compete on television. The NFL's blackout policies – which require home games to be blacked out in local television markets if it is not sold out 72 hours prior to kickoff – could deny Ohioans the opportunity to watch these games.

While I understand the need for the league to sell tickets and maintain an attractive television product, NFL blackout policies should be revisited as our nation faces the worst economic crisis in generations. During these difficult times, working families are struggling to make ends meet. Although appealing, attending a football game is simply cost prohibitive for too many Ohioans. The average price for an NFL game ticket is \$77 – nearly ten times the hourly minimum wage. The problem will only become worse, as 18 teams have increased ticket prices for the upcoming 2010 season.

Current economic conditions, coupled with rising ticket prices, have led to a predictable rise in the number of blackouts. Last season, the NFL blacked out 22 games, which represents a 144 percent increase from the previous season. With overall attendance expected to decline further this year, some experts believe the NFL will black out even more games this season, and thus make it even harder for fans to watch their favorite teams.

Football has been a long source of pride for communities across Ohio. It is deeply troubling that increasing blackouts could deprive families and friends the tradition of watching their beloved Cleveland Browns or Cincinnati Bengals on Sunday afternoons. I ask the NFL to examine its current television blackout policies and develop solutions that allow for franchises to remain viable businesses, while allowing fans to enjoy the game they love, both in person at the stadium or on television at home.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this matter. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator