



June 19, 2026

Dear Senator Hawley:

We are in receipt of your letter dated June 16, 2026. The letter raises two distinct issues, and we will address each of them.

First, your letter asserts that by warning three San Francisco Giants players that they are not permitted to alter their cap, MLB has discriminated against players. MLB takes discrimination against its players or in any form related to the league very seriously. As you reference in your letter, MLB has a policy negotiated with the Major League Baseball Players Association that states a “[p]layer may not write, attach, affix, embroider, or otherwise display nicknames or messages on apparel or playing equipment.” This policy is enforced without regard to the substance of the messaging. The rationale for the policy is that the league does not desire for its players to become messengers for political or social issues while in uniform playing baseball games because many messages have the potential to offend some segment of our fanbase – even if that was not the intent of the player. MLB’s policy must be uniformly enforced regardless of the message in order for it to survive legal challenge, which means prohibiting both the positive message and the negative message. By warning the Giants players that they may not include Bible verses on their caps in the future, MLB was not discriminating or chastising those players based on their religious beliefs; rather MLB was enforcing (with only an oral warning) a long-standing, collectively bargained rule that keeps uniforms clean and avoids controversy. The rule has been similarly applied to a variety of messages, some as innocuous as messages to a player’s mother or honoring a deceased friend.

Second, before I turn to the Giants issue, I will provide you with some background on commemoration or celebration days that every MLB Club includes in their schedule.

At the league level, MLB has twelve league-wide events each year in which the uniform or hat is altered to commemorate the day, and in which all Clubs must participate. The twelve events are: Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Armed Forces Weekend, Play Ball Weekend, Memorial Day, Lou Gehrig Day, Independence Day, Hall of Fame Weekend, Childhood Cancer Awareness Day, September 11th, Jackie Robinson Day and Roberto Clemente Day. For these days, players wear special uniforms and hats, and for some of the days, the Uniform Regulations contained in the collective bargaining agreement are relaxed per agreement with the Union. We are unaware of any significant complaints from fans or players regarding these celebratory days.

In addition, Clubs at their discretion are permitted to include other celebratory or commemorative days in their schedules. For example, the majority of our Clubs host faith/religious-related games (including four Clubs that have scheduled three such games this year), games celebrating different ethnicities or nationalities that are part of their communities (including, for example, games celebrating Black, Hispanic, Asian, European, Caribbean, and Canadian heritage), games honoring first responders, and games honoring local military veterans. MLB does not regulate these events, but also does not permit Clubs or players to utilize special uniforms/equipment for such games, or alter the uniform or equipment.

We understand that some players or other on-field personnel have not been comfortable wearing the pride emblem on their uniform based on their religious beliefs. As a league, we agree with the principle that players or other Club employees – at their place of work – should not be compelled to participate in a celebratory event (particularly by wearing something on their person) if such participation would violate their sincere religious beliefs or values. As a result, to avoid putting players or others in an uncomfortable position, beginning in 2023, we adopted a policy of not permitting Clubs to utilize special uniforms, hats or equipment in their celebration days except under very narrow circumstances (patches honoring deceased members of the baseball community, commemorating baseball milestones, and things of that nature).

In 2023, the Dodgers and the Giants requested their use of the pride emblem on uniforms/hats on Pride Night be grandfathered. Los Angeles and San Francisco are homes to some of the largest LGBTQ communities in the United States, and those Clubs desired to show their appreciation and support for those communities that have supported their Clubs throughout the years. MLB agreed to allow them to utilize the hats/uniforms with the emblems provided that no player or uniformed staff would be required to wear them, and that the team would speak to the players to make sure they were comfortable with the apparel.

Since 2023, the Dodgers and Giants have operated under this grandfathered exception. Unfortunately, this year the Giants communication with players was inadequate and not clear. Some players apparently did not understand that they had the option to wear their normal uniform and elected to add messages to their hats bearing the pride logo as a result. The Giants players were allowed to wear the hats with the biblical references for the entire game. After the game had concluded, my office issued a routine oral warning about the uniform policy violation – unfortunately it was issued before we became aware of the Giants' lapse in communication. The players were neither fined nor disciplined, nor will they ever be.

In closing, MLB believes in the right of our players and fans to express their religious beliefs, and at the same time supports the communities in this country that are fans of our Clubs, including the LGBTQ community. We believe that a policy permitting our Clubs to celebrate or honor segments of its fanbase, yet does not require players or other on-field personnel to directly participate in the celebration in ways that make them uncomfortable, strikes the right balance. We also believe that it is crucial to maintain our policy prohibiting

uniform alterations of any type no matter how positive to avoid the problems associated with censoring some message but not others. We will continue to consult with our players and Clubs to ensure that our policies are developed and executed in a manner that respects the diversity of values and beliefs of the people who play baseball professionally and the tens of millions of fans who love the game.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Robert D. Manfred, Jr." in a cursive style.

Robert D. Manfred, Jr.