

Opening Statement
Kansas State University Director of Athletics Tim Weiser
To the Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee
On Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection

February 28, 2007

Chairman Rush and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, good morning and thank you for allowing me this opportunity to address the issue of diversity in the positions of collegiate athletics directors and head coaches in the Bowl Championship Subdivision of the National Collegiate Athletics Association.

My name is Tim Weiser. I was asked here to speak with you today specifically because the institution I represent as the Director of Athletics, Kansas State University of the Big 12 Conference, is one of only six Bowl Championship Subdivision athletics programs to have an African-American in position as head football coach. Ron Prince, the son of a non-commissioned U.S. Army officer, was raised in Junction City, Kansas, home of Fort Riley and the Big Red One, just 15 miles from the Kansas State University campus. He was hired in December 2005 in place of the retiring Bill Snyder, a Hall of Fame coach who in his 17-year career was credited with what has been called the "Miracle in Manhattan: the greatest turnaround in college football history." Coach Prince has quickly made his own mark, producing a winning record and leading the Wildcats to the Texas Bowl in his first season.

I believe I also can offer insight to this Subcommittee on the topic before us because of my history of diversity in hiring head coaches as well as my position representing the Division 1A Athletics Directors' Association as the incoming President.

This background allows me, within my personal experiences, to reflect upon current and historical practices in our profession that are relevant to today's discussion.

As I begin my 25th year in collegiate athletics administration, the past 20 years as the Director of Athletics at four different institutions, I have been blessed to be part of many achievement and milestones, both on the field and off. In my first experience at Wichita State University, I had the opportunity to work with Willie Jeffries, the first African-American head football coach in Division 1A history. I am certain that, as a 24-year-old breaking into the athletics business, those experiences helped shape my understanding of the importance of diversity within an athletics department. Once I became an Athletics Director and was in the position of authority for hiring coaches and staff, I selected the first-ever African-American head basketball coaches at Eastern Michigan University and at Colorado State University. Ron Prince is the first African-American head football coach at Kansas State. I think it should be noted that Kansas State has been at the forefront of diversity in athletics; in 1949 Wildcat football player Harold Robinson became the first African-American athlete to be awarded an athletics scholarship from any institution in what was then the Big Seven Conference.

I believe it is important for this Subcommittee to understand that in each of these appointments, the decision I made was based on the belief of who was the best fit for the particular institution and the most qualified candidate for the job. This has always been the ultimate factor in my decision-making process for hiring coaches.

As the incoming President of the Division IA Athletics Directors' Association, I am encouraged by what I see as an evolution within my profession. The business is changing rapidly. There may have been a time when an Athletics Director was often a

former coach or a favorite son of the institution, but as the enterprises have grown and the financial implications have become so significant, the job now requires skill sets and new ways of thinking involving leadership, counseling, personnel management, fundraising, and much more. I believe the ultimate goal of an Athletics Director is to provide, within the means of the particular institution, the necessary support and resources to give each student-athlete his or her best opportunity to graduate with a meaningful degree and be adequately prepared for a successful life to become leaders of, and contributors to, our nation.

Our profession is looked upon now, in large part, just like any other multi-million-dollar business enterprise requiring progressive and inclusive processes that allow for growth in ways that did not exist in years past. A constant in the role of an Athletics Director, not unlike that of any other CEO of a corporation, is the importance of making good decisions in the hiring of head coaches. We are defined, in large part, by the choices we make for our head football and basketball coaches because we are all seeking to discover that man or woman who can succeed in building a championship program.

You have asked me here today because you're looking for answers as to why there are not more than six African-American head football coaches at the highest level of NCAA football. Clearly, the growth in this area has been slow and I can only testify to my own actions. However, as I look at the sport of men's basketball and the growth in the number of African-American head coaches in place, I am encouraged that similar progress can be achieved. But steps and incentives for progressive leadership need to be put in place to move us forward. It will take the guidance of Mr. Myles Brand,

President of the NCAA, and all university presidents, athletics directors and even head football coaches themselves to create an environment that expands the pool of qualified candidates and provide more networking opportunities to allow those individuals to become more widely known for consideration, as has become the practice in the National Football League. In fact, a better dialogue between the collegiate hierarchy and that of the NFL, which is tapping into the talent pool of minority collegiate coaches, to allow for discussion of reciprocal arrangements regarding the interview and hiring processes currently in place could prove beneficial. Additionally, legislation to provide financial incentives for those NCAA member institutions who employ minority head coaches and athletics directors could be drafted for adoption by the NCAA. The “diversity incentive” would reward, not punish, those who seek to improve and grow the current pool of minority head coaches and athletics directors. I offer these as just a couple of examples of ways we at the collegiate level can consider expanding opportunities for minority candidates as we contemplate a new direction for collegiate athletics.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer my thoughts and share my experiences. I look forward to answering your questions.