June 10, 2020

Re: Amash-Pressley Ending Qualified Immunity Act

Dear Members of the United States Congress:

We are more than 1,400 current and former professional athletes and coaches from across the National Football League, National Basketball Association, and Major League Baseball in America. We are tired of conversations around police accountability that go nowhere, and we have engaged in too many “listening sessions” where we discuss whether there is a problem of police violence in this country. There is a problem. The world witnessed it when Officer Chauvin murdered George Floyd, and the world is watching it now, as officers deploy enormous force on peaceful protestors like those who were standing outside of the White House last week. The time for debate about the unchecked authority of the police is over; it is now time for change.

We are writing to ask that you pass the bill to end qualified immunity introduced by Representatives Justin Amash and Ayanna Pressley. Congress passed the Ku Klux Klan Act in 1871 to give ordinary citizens recourse when powerful public officials violate constitutional rights. By passing that Act, codified in 42 U.S.C. 1983, Congress told its citizenry that no one is above the law, especially those who abuse government power. A healthy democracy requires no less; citizens must know that if those who promise to uphold the law and protect the community fail to do so, there is a remedy available. The law, as one author has noted, is “a bulwark of American liberty.”

The Supreme Court has caused irreparable harm to public trust by creating and then expanding the doctrine of qualified immunity, which often exempts police officers and others from liability, even for shocking abuse. Under that doctrine, first developed in 1967 and widened ever since, plaintiffs must show that government officials violated “clearly established” law to receive damages for harm. A plaintiff wins only if a prior Court found an official liable under a nearly identical fact-pattern. This standard is virtually impossible to meet, and the protections promised under section 1983 seem largely symbolic as a result.

Qualified immunity has shielded some of the worst law enforcement officials in America. The 8th Circuit applied it to an officer who wrapped a woman in a bear hug, slammed her to the ground, and broke her collarbone as she walked away from him. The 9th Circuit applied the doctrine to two officers who allegedly stole $225,000 while executing a search warrant. The Eleventh Circuit applied the doctrine to protect an officer who unintentionally shot a ten-year old while firing at the family dog (who, much
like the child, posed no threat). The list of officers who suffered no consequences because of this doctrine could fill a law book.

It is time for Congress to eliminate qualified immunity, and it can do so by passing the Amash-Pressley bill. When police officers kill an unarmed man, when they beat a woman, or when they shoot a child, the people of this country must have a way to hold them accountable in a court of law. And officers must know that if they act in such a manner, there will be repercussions. A legal system that does not provide such a recourse is an illegitimate one. In their grief, people have taken to the streets because for too long, their government has failed to protect them. The Courts and elected officials alike have instead shielded people who caused unspeakable harm. Congress must not be complicit in these injustices, and it should take this important step to show that law enforcement abuse will not be tolerated.

Sincerely,

Players Coalition members, current/former NFL, NBA, MLB players and coaches:

Ameer Abdullah
Matthew Adams
Rodney Adams
Klayton Adams
Sam Adams
Josh Adams
Quincy Adeboyjo
Jude Adjei-Barimah
McTelvin Agim
Chidi Ahanotu
Eric Alexander
Anthony Alford
Raul Allegre
Beau Allen
Ian Allen
Dakota Allen
Josh Allen
Ricardo Allen
Bennie Anderson
Charlie Anderson
Tim Anderson
David Andrews
Marty Anthony Lyons
Kenny Anunike
Chris Archer
Terron Armstead
Jessie Armstead
Arik Armstead
Amon Arnold
Dan Audick
Denico Autry
Brendon Ayanbadejo
Obafemi Ayanbadejo
Stevie Baggs Jr.
Robert Bailey
Kabeer Baja-Biamila
Brian Baker
Doug Baldwin
David Ball
Larry Ball
Carl Banks
Tony Banks
Ben Banogu
Shawn Barber
Luq Barcoo
Kenjon Barner
Erich Barnes
Ben Barch
Essang Bassey
Daren Bates
Nick Bawden
Gary Baxter
Jarrod Baxter
Kelvin Beachum
Chris Beake
Tim Beckham
Odell Beckham Jr.
Greg Bell
Kurt Benkert
Bene Benwikere
Alex Bregman
Damien Berry
Justin Bethel
McLeod Bethel-Thompson
Eric Bieniemy
Adam Bighill
Andrew Billings
Joel Bitonio
Julian Blackmon
Ronald Blair
Matt Blanchard
Rodrigo Blankenship
Jeff Bleamer
Joe Bleymaier
Dennis Blagen
David Blough
CJ Board
Joe Bock
Kim Bokamper
Juran Bolden
Victor Bolden
Anquan Boldin
Ron Bolton
Rik Bonness
Jon Borchardt
Dave Bargonzi
A.J. Bouye
Dwayne Bowe
Tom Brady
Marcus Brady
Mark Brammer
Colin Branch
Marcelis Branch
Delvin Breaux
Drew Brees
Sam Brenner
Tyronne Drakeford
Pete Draovitch
Troy Drayton
Davon Drew
Jack Driscoll
Clifton Duck
Rickey Dudley
Bill Duff
Bobby Duhon
Davon Dumas
JoLonn Dunbar
Jamie Duncan
Keldrick Dunn
Justin Dunn
Jon Duplantier
Tim Dwight
Jeffrey E Faulkner
Michael Early
Jacob Eason
Matt Eberflus
Samson Ebukam
Dwan Edwards
David Edwards
Emeka Egbule
Jake Eldrenkamp
Bruce Elia
Keith Elias
Ben Ellefson
Emmanuel Ellerbee
Porter Ellett
Jake Elliot
Greg Ellis
Justin Ellis
Elbert Ellis
Percy Ellsworth
Jermaine Eluemunor
Jon Embree
Larry English
Zach Ertz
Jordan Evans
Demetric Evans
Nate Evans
Darrynton Evans
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Zane Fakes
Vic Fangio
Wes Farnsworth
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Tony Fisher
Jack Flaherty
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Brian Fleury
Drayton Florence
Christopher Foerster
Drew Forbes
Bernard Ford
Daurice Fountain
Melvin Fowler
Dexter Fowler
Vernon Fox
Eric Frampton
Zaire Franklin
Byron Franklin
Parks Frazier
Mike Frazier
Kavon Frazier
Dwight Freeney
Eddie Fuller
Jedidiah G Collins
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Russell Gage
Russell Gage
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EJ Gaines
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Jonathan Gannon
Malik Gant
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Mark Garalczyk
Jim Garcia
Dr. Leonard Garrett
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Amir Garrett
Rashan Gary
Percell Gaskins
Jordan Gay
Shaun Gayle
Tony George
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Tony Gilbert
Joe Giles-Harris
Nate Gilliam
Reginald Gipson
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Graham Glasgow
La'Roi Glover
Terry Godwin
Keith Goganious
Nick Goings
Tony Gonzalez
Julian Good-Jones
Donald Goode
Niko Goodrum
Marquise Goodwin
CJ Goodwin
Melvin Gordon
Dee Gordon
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Colby Gossett
Jermaine Grace
Earnest Graham
Devin Gray
Chaz Green
Farrod Green
Gerrit Green
Ahman Green
Willie Green
Ethan Greenidge
Jabari Greer
Steve Gregory
Nick Greisen
Michael Griffin
Otis Grigsby
Jordan Gross
Tori Gurley
Lawrence Guy
Myron Guyton
Jalen Guyton
Tony Gwynn Jr.
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Dennis Haley
Grant Haley
Bryan Hall
PJ Hall
Adrian Hamilton
Davon Hamilton
Antonio Hamilton
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Duron Harmon
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Eric Lane
Cedrick Lang
Jesse Langvardt
Matt Lawrence
Nate Lawrie
Emanuel Lawson
Vonta Leach
Kari Lee
James Lee
Cleo Lemon
Laveranues Leon Coles Jr.
Darius Leonard
Fred Lester
Jerry Levias
DeAndre Levy
Tyquan Lewis
Thomas Lewis
Jermaine Lewis
Jeremy Lincoln
Adam Linger
Chris Long
David Long
Shed Long
Jammal Lord
Clarence Love
Jordan Lucas
Cornelius Lucas
Sean Lumpkin
Cameron Lynch
Aaron Lynch
Marlon Mack
Jordan Mack
Mark Maddox
Sam Madison
Mike Mallory
Doug Marrone
Leonard Marshall
Koda Martin
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Gabe Martin
Eric Martin Jr.
Glenn Martinez
Robert Mathis
Ross Matiscik
Chris Matthews
Alexander Mattison
Brett Maxie
Marcus Maxwell
Ray May
Cameron Maybin
Baker Mayfield
Corey Mays
Joey Mbu Jr.
Ben McCaddoo
Deuce McAllister
Keenan McCardell
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Devin McCourty
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Randall McDaniel
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Tyler McDonald
O.J. McDuffie
Leon McFadden
Kimario McFadden
Booger McFarland
Tony McGee
Kevin McGill
Michael McGruder
Guy McIntyre
Doug McKenney
Benardrick McKinney
James McKnight
Rodney McLeod
Tom McMahon
Brandon McManus
Erik McMillan
Mark McMillan
Sean McNanie
Tony McRae
Montrel Meander
Dave Merritt
Jason Michael
Arthur Michalik
Doug Middleton
Jamir Miller
Billy Miller
Rolan Milligan
Eugene Milton
Jonathan Mincey
Gardner Minshew
Terrance Mitchell
Stump Mitchell
Earl Mitchell
Arthur Moats
Curtis Modkins
Ty Montgomery
DJ Montgomery
Kenny Moore
Skai Moore
DJ Moore
Lance Moore
Nat Moore
Jordan Moore
Marlon Moore
Emery Moorehead
Patrick Morris
Michael Morton
Raheem Mostert
Jamie Mueller
Al-Quadin Muhammad
Muhsin Muhammad
Bill Munson
Louis Murphy Jr.
Chris Myers
Picasso Nelson
Quenton Nelson
Corey Nelson
Shane Nelson
Steven Nelson
Ty Neske
Ryan Neufeld
Anthony Newman
Tyler Newsome
Nathaniel Newton Jr.
Parry Nickerson
Steven Nielsen
Roosevelt Nix
Jeff Nixon
David Njoku
Derrick Nnadi
Josh Norman
Moran Norris
Storm Norton
Carter O'Donnell
Cornelius O'Donoghue
Anthony Oakley
Stephen Odom
George Odum
Marques Ogden
Larry Ogunjobi
Michael Ojemudia
Alex Okafor
Bobby Okereke
Ogbonnia Okoronkwo
Deji Olatoye
Josh Oliver
Louis Oliver
Donovan Olumba
Glendora Stephens-Wright on behalf of Gordon Arnold Wright
Kenny Onatolu
Joseph Orduna
Raheem Orr Sr.
Matt Orzech
Jerry Ostroski
Shaun Williams
Calvin Williams
Lawrence Williams
Kevin Williams
Kobe Williams
Jordan Williams
Xavier Williams
Daryl Williams Jr.
Wally Williams Jr.
Mike Willie
Nathaniel Willingham
Khari Willis
Jedrick Wills Jr.
George Wilson
CJ Wilson
Charles Wilson
Josh Wilson
Damien Wilson
James Wilson
Jamaine Winborne
Robert Windsor
Andrew Wingard
Ronnie Wingo
Chase Winovich
Blaise Winter
Mitchell Wishnowsky
Will Witherspoon
Will Wolford
Nathan Wonsley
Shawn Wooden
Al Woods
Robert Woods
Wesley Woodyard
Bidi Wreh-Wilson
Kenyatta Wright
Rodney Wright

In addition to the players and coaches, the following front office personnel and general managers have lent their support:

David A. Jenkins
Edward Aaron Perez
Christopher Acosta
Armoud Aghanian
Robert Akaminsi
David Akosim
Kelly Allen
Kahlil Allen
Leo Amos
Renie Anderson
Monique Anderson
Justin Anderson
Brock Anderson
Paul Andraos
Patrick Arthur
Nana-Yaw Asamoah
Chad Austin Jessop
Adrian Bailey
Chanelle Balfour
Chris Ballard
Lauren Bartomioli
Megan Bell
Nancy Bernstein
Andrew Berry
Lindsey Bethel
Heather Birdsal
Nicole Blake
Michael Blanchard
Dylan Bohanan
Steve Boholson
Max Boiggon
Allison Bojarski
Chloe Booher
Kevin Boothe
Stephen Bowen
Dustin Bowlin
Emma Bradford
Courtland Bragg
Alyse Brehm
Ron Brewer
Ethan Brodsky
Morocco Brown
Jade Burroughs
Joey Buskirk
Zach Byrne
Colton Cadarette
Lindsay Caine
Geneva Camacho
Lucas Cambra
Kaycee Canlas
Eddie Capobianco
Corey Casado
Nick Caserio
Dick Cass
Concetta Cavaleri
Gerardo Chapa
Jonathan Charles
Taylor Chavez
Hedy Chen
Mitch Chester
Kimberly Chexnayder
Hsu-Wei Chow
Willie Wright
Brandon Wright
Tay Wright
Ellis Wynn
Isaiah Wynn
Milton Wynn
Rock Ya-Sin
James Yarbrough
Kenny Young
Usama Young
Trevor Young
Eric Young Jr.
Olamide Zaccheaus
David Zawatson
Raymond Zeller
Justin Zimmer
Jeremy Zuttah
Louis Clark
Katherine Conklin
Daksha Cordova
Felipe Corral
Omar Coss Y Leon
Keith Cossrow
Kara Costa
Anthony Coughlan
Patrick Crawley
Matt Cummings
AJ Curry
Issiah Davis
Brian Decker
Alison DeGroot
Brittany Deise
Mike Derice
Amber Derrow
Keith Dobkowski
Anne Doepner
Gabrielle Doheny
Jordan Dolbin
William Dorrance
Anne Duffy
Deandra Duggans
Alex Duplessis
Philip Eident
Regis Eller
Joey Elliott
Rich Elmore
Hayley Elwood
Cameron Etheredge