

**Written Testimony before the
U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Financial Services
Subcommittee on Diversity and Inclusion**

**Hearing Entitled:
Promoting Inclusion: Examining the Need for Diversity Practices for America's Changing
Workforce**

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My name is Rod Graves. I am the Executive Director of the Fritz Pollard Alliance. I joined the FPA in June of 2019 after serving 35 years in the National Football League. I also worked two years in the United States Football League before joining the NFL. My duties in the NFL ranged from working as Senior Vice President of Football Administration and Club Services at the NFL to Senior Director of Football Administration for the New York Jets to General Manager and Vice President of Football Operations for the Arizona Cardinals to Director of Player Personnel for the Chicago Bears. I've been a member of two NFC Championship teams and one Super Bowl winner.

The Fritz Pollard Alliance is an advocacy group. We were co-founded in 2003 by the late Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr. and civil rights attorney Cyrus Mehri of Mehri & Skalet in Washington D.C. For the past 15 years, John Wooten, a former NFL player and team executive. Mr. Wooten's dedication to diversity and equal opportunity set the foundation for our organization. He retired in the spring of this year.

Our members include coaches, scouts, front office personnel and game day officials. Our primary focus is on the men and women of color within the National Football League. We are most known for our support of diverse candidates at the Head Coach and General Manager positions, but our work goes beyond those positions. Our mission is to champion diversity in the NFL through education and to provide our members with resources that will help them succeed at every level of the game. Our vision is to see the diversity of leadership in the business plan of every sports team.

The Fritz Pollard Alliance developed the Rooney Rule. The rule, named after the late Dan Rooney, owner of the Pittsburgh Steelers, requires NFL teams in search of a Head Coach or General Manager to interview multiple diverse candidates. The Rule also requires that the final decision-maker be involved throughout the hiring process. Enforcement power rests with the NFL Commissioner.

The efforts behind the Rooney Rule have been extremely successful. The rule has produced a record number of minority head coaches and general managers and has built up pipelines of talent around the League. In the 15 years prior to the adoption of the Rooney Rule only 4 minorities were selected as head coach of an NFL club. In contrast, approximately 20 minorities have been selected as head coaches in the 15 years following the rule's adoption. Similarly, only one minority served as General Manager or in a General Manager equivalent position prior to the adoption of the Rooney Rule compared with least 8 since the rule's adoption.

Most importantly, our members have seized their opportunities and have achieved enormous success. Indeed, after the Rooney Rule's adoption, 10 NFL Super Bowl teams have been led by a minority head coach or general manager including head coaches Lovie Smith (Bears), Tony Dungy (Colts), Mike Tomlin (Steelers (twice)), Jim Caldwell (Colts), Ron Rivera (Panthers) and General Managers Jerry Reese (Giants (twice)), Ozzie Newsome (Ravens), and myself when I served as GM of the Arizona Cardinals.

Many companies, such as Xerox, Intel, Microsoft, Facebook, Pinterest, and Goldman Sachs have followed our lead and implemented a version of the Rooney Rule.

The Rooney Rule has impacted both my personal and professional success. In 2004, Bill Bidwill, owner of the Arizona Cardinals, hired Dennis Green as the organization's first African American Head Coach and made me General Manager. We were the first Black GM/HC combination in NFL history.

Before the Rooney Rule was enacted, minorities in the NFL relied almost exclusively on mentors and networking opportunities for a chance to develop skills and to further their careers. My career was largely influenced by my father, Jackie Graves who worked in the NFL as a scout and personnel executive. I was influenced by great men like John Wooten, Tank Younger, Milt Davis, Charles Garcia, Bill Nunn, Dick Daniels, and Bill Tobin.

As an executive and General Manager, I participated in the hiring of several head coaches, coordinators, and other football executives. The exposure that my organization and I gained to diverse candidates as a result of the Rooney Rule was invaluable. We not only learned about the individuals and their skill sets, but we learned a great deal about the teams that they came from. It was an enriching experience for me because it enabled me to learn about the processes used by successful organizations and it helped me to form a strong Ready List of future candidates.

The Rooney Rule benefits organizations and diverse candidates. The exposure gained by diverse candidates during an interview process helps them to be better prepared and to become more informed about the organizations they are seeking to join.

What we have learned, however, about the Rooney Rule and the other equal opportunity initiatives taken by teams and the NFL is that these measures do not ensure positive outcomes for diversity. There cannot be sustained success in the area of diversity and inclusion without a commitment by those making the decisions. A number of teams have demonstrated their

commitment to equal opportunity by ensuring diversity of leadership and by creating a D&I strategy that focuses on selecting diverse candidates and grooming the top performers for leadership roles in the future. Our goal is to ensure that many more teams follow suit.