

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 22, 2021

Mr. Robert D. Manfred Jr.  
Commissioner  
Major League Baseball  
1271 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, NY 10020

Dear Mr. Manfred:

We ask that you provide documents and information about Major League Baseball's (MLB) attempt to use its immense market power and resources to influence the official actions of the elected representatives of Georgia. Earlier this month, MLB unilaterally decided to move its annual All-Star Game from Atlanta, Georgia, based on an incorrect and partisan understanding of Georgia's election integrity legislation. Because MLB enjoys special and unique antitrust immunities that have allowed it to become America's only nationwide professional baseball league, MLB's actions amount to attempted economic extortion that has harmed small businesses in and around Atlanta.

On April 5, 2021, the MLB announced it would move its 2021 All-Star Game from Atlanta, Georgia, to Denver, Colorado, in response to a law passed by Georgia's duly elected legislature and signed into law by Georgia's duly elected governor.<sup>1</sup> The new law, S.B. 202, strengthens ballot box protections and enhances election integrity in Georgia.<sup>2</sup> The law expands early voting by requiring additional access to weekend voting, codifies the use of ballot drop boxes, reduces precinct wait times, and requires identification for absentee voting, which is already required for in-person voting.<sup>3</sup>

MLB's decision to insert itself in Georgia's election laws was based on inaccurate and politicized information. Although Democrats and some woke corporate elites like to claim that the new Georgia law constitutes "Jim Crow 2.0" and "voter suppression,"<sup>4</sup> these claims are false and unfounded. In fact, the law enhances access to voting and many of the new provisions "are popular even among Black voters."<sup>5</sup> An *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* poll found that 74 percent

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<sup>1</sup> Lucas Manfredi, *Sen. Tim Scott on MLB moving All-Star game from Georgia: 'The Wokes are at it again'*, FOX NEWS (Apr. 6, 2021), <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/tim-scott-mlb-all-star-game-from-georgia>.

<sup>2</sup> S.B. 202, 2021 Gen. Assemb., Reg. Sess. (Ga. 2021).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*; see also Adam Brewster & Caitlin Huey-Burns, *What Georgia's new voting law really does—9 facts*, CBS NEWS (Apr. 7, 2021), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/georgia-voting-law-9-facts/>.

<sup>4</sup> Teri Kanefield, *Georgia's 'Jim Crow' voter suppression bill is now law. Here's how Democrats can fight back*, NBC NEWS (Mar. 28, 2021), <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/georgia-s-jim-crow-voter-suppression-bill-now-law-here-ncna1262254>; Jason Morgan Ward, *Georgia's voter law is called 'Jim Crow 2.0' for a reason*, N.Y. TIMES (Mar. 31, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/31/opinion/georgia-voting-law.html>; Chandelis Duster, *Abrams on GOP efforts to target voting: 'It is a redux of Jim Crow in a suit and tie'*, CNN (Mar. 14, 2021), <https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/14/politics/stacey-abrams-voting-rights-gop-georgia-cnn-tv/index.html>.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

of Georgians support voter ID requirements, including 63 percent of African American respondents.<sup>6</sup>

While MLB has criticized Georgia, it has raised no similar concerns about the election laws in Colorado, the new location of the All-Star Game, or in New York, the state of MLB's headquarters—even though those states have more restrictive election laws than Georgia. For example, Georgia's new law provides 17 days of early voting while Colorado has only 15 days.<sup>7</sup> New York, similarly, only provides early voting ten days before the election and does not allow for no-excuse absentee voting.<sup>8</sup> With respect to voter identification—which partisan advocates cited as a particular concern about Georgia's new law—Colorado, like Georgia, requires voter identification for in-person voting and first-time mail-in voters.<sup>9</sup>

MLB's opposition to voter integrity measures in Georgia is also unabashedly hypocritical in light of MLB's close partnerships with communist regimes in China and Cuba—two countries that suppress free and fair elections. In 2017, MLB announced a ten-year partnership with a Chinese state-owned enterprise to grow baseball in the People's Republic of China.<sup>10</sup> A senior MLB official noted that the league was “honored to team up with one of China's more forward-thinking, innovative and successful companies.”<sup>11</sup> Likewise, MLB has worked closely with Cuba for years to maintain a pipeline of players from Cuba into MLB.<sup>12</sup>

MLB's decision to remove the All-Star Game from Georgia will have a real and devastating effect on the local economy. The 2019 All-Star Game brought an estimated \$65 million in “regional economic activity” to Cleveland, Ohio.<sup>13</sup> The 2021 All-Star Game likely would have infused a similar amount into Atlanta's local economy. This loss in revenue will harm Atlanta businesses,<sup>14</sup> nearly 30 percent of which are owned by African Americans.<sup>15</sup>

All Americans deserve free, fair, and accurate elections. You are certainly entitled to oppose state-based election integrity measures and to assemble with other like-minded

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<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*; see also S.B. 202, 2021 Gen. Assemb., Reg. Sess. (Ga. 2021); *How do Colorado voting laws compare to Georgia in wake of MLB All-Star Game move*, FOX 5 ATLANTA (Apr. 7, 2021), <https://www.fox5atlanta.com/news/how-do-colorado-voting-laws-compare-to-georgia>.

<sup>8</sup> See Nat'l Conference of State Legislatures, *State Laws Governing Early Voting*, <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/early-voting-in-state-elections.aspx> (last visited Apr. 20, 2021); New York State, Board of Elections, *Absentee Voting*, <https://www.elections.ny.gov/VotingAbsentee.html> (last visited Apr. 20, 2021).

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> Press Release, Major League Baseball, *MLB unveils partnership to help grow game in China* (Dec. 22, 2017), <https://www.mlb.com/news/mlb-reveals-plans-to-help-game-grow-in-china-c263931024>.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> Press Release, Major League Baseball, *MLB, MLBPA reach deal with Cuban Federation* (Dec. 19, 2018), <https://www.mlb.com/news/mlb-announces-deal-with-cuban-federation-c302036110>.

<sup>13</sup> Manfredi, *supra* note 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

<sup>15</sup> Kiersten Willis, *Atlanta lands in top 5 of best cities for Black-owned businesses*, ATLANTA J. CONST. (Feb. 9, 2021), <https://www.ajc.com/life/atlanta-lands-in-top-5-of-best-cities-for-black-owned-businesses/Y74UDK23EZBIXEPFFC7B7D22KA/>.

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individuals in your opposition. The U.S. Constitution guarantees you these rights, just as it empowers states to administer elections within their jurisdictions.<sup>16</sup> The trouble comes when MLB uses its immense market power and resources as a cudgel to achieve its preferred public policy outcome. By relocating the 2021 All-Star Game—and the corresponding economic activity—away from Atlanta as punishment for Georgia’s election integrity legislation, MLB is inappropriately leveraging its monopolistic power to impose its will on the citizens of Georgia. MLB’s actions necessitate an evaluation of whether MLB’s special and unique antitrust exemption continues to benefit the American people.

For all these reasons, we request that you produce the following material concerning MLB’s decision to punish Georgia for its election integrity measures:

1. All documents and communications referring or relating to the relocation of the 2021 All-Star Game for the period January 1, 2021, to the present;
2. All documents and communications referring or relating to MLB’s examination of election laws in Georgia;
3. All documents and communications referring or relating to MLB’s examination of election laws in Colorado or New York;
4. All documents and communications referring or relating to MLB’s examination of election laws in China or Cuba; and
5. All documents and communications between employees, contractors, or representatives of MLB and employees or representatives of civil rights or voting rights organizations.

Please produce this material as soon as possible but no later than 5:00 p.m. on May 6, 2021. Pursuant to House Rule X, the Judiciary Committee has jurisdiction over voting rights and antitrust laws. The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact Judiciary Committee staff at (202) 225-6906 or Oversight Committee staff at (202) 225-5074. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.



Jim Jordan  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Judiciary

Sincerely,



James Comer  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Oversight and Reform

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<sup>16</sup> U.S. CONST. art. I § 4.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jody Hice". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jody Hice  
Committee on Oversight and Reform

cc: The Honorable Jerrold L. Nadler, Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman, Committee on Oversight and Reform