



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on January 24, 2018

NFL Rejects Veteran Group's Super Bowl Ad Against National Anthem Protests

The NFL has been losing viewership in large part over its support of the players' controversial National Anthem protests, and now the organization has rejected a Super Bowl ad by the veterans group AMVETS that asks Americans to stand for the National Anthem. The NFL rejected the ad. The organization claims it is interested in keeping the Super Bowl apolitical, despite the league's astounding history of politicking.



The AMVETS ad featured American soldiers carrying the flag with the hashtag #PleaseStand, with the intent to discourage the NFL players from kneeling in protests against alleged police brutality and racism. But the NFL claimed that the Super Bowl was not the time for politics and rejected the \$30,000 ad.

The NFL's Vice President of Communications Brian McCarthy responded:

The Super Bowl game program is designed for fans to commemorate and celebrate the game, players, teams and the Super Bowl. It's never been a place for advertising that could be considered by some as a political statement. The NFL has long supported the military and veterans and will again salute our service members in the Super Bowl with memorable on-field moments that will be televised as part of the game.

The hypocrisy of the NFL's statement is blatant. The NFL has already turned the football field into a political stage and has not taken a stance against the athletes' kneeling protests, despite the backlash and the loss of NFL viewership they have caused.

Furthermore, just last year the NFL struck a deal to provide financial support to players' community activism endeavors, without any stipulations regarding the Anthem protests. The league and teams agreed to provide approximately \$90 to \$100 million through 2023 to social causes deemed important by the players, with a particular focus on African American communities.

The NFL also involved itself in the transgender bathroom debate when it threatened to punish Texas for introducing a transgender bathroom bill similar to North Carolina's, even though the bill had no impact on stadiums and entertainment venues. At the time, McCarthy threatened to bar the state of Texas from hosting future Super Bowls if the bill passed into law.

"The NFL embraces inclusiveness. We want all fans to feel welcomed at our events and NFL policies prohibit discrimination based on age, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, or any other improper standard," McCarthy said. "If a proposal that is discriminatory or inconsistent with our values were to become law there, that would certainly be a factor considered when thinking about awarding future events," he added, speaking of the legislation.

In 2016, the NFL awarded San Francisco 49ers Colin Kaepernick the Len Eshmont Award for being



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“inspirational and courageous” based on his vocal opposition to the National Anthem. The Daily Wire opined, “While the league banned innocuous celebrations and even prevented one player from wearing patriotic cleats in memory of 9/11, it stood firmly behind Kaepernick’s anti-American/anti-law enforcement protest, even while fans made clear how much it turned them off. And yet when the Dallas Cowboys attempted to place an ‘Arm in Arm’ decal on their helmets to honor the five officers killed in Dallas, the NFL stopped it.”

This does not sound like an organization interested in remaining apolitical.

Beyond that, the Super Bowl in particular has proved to be a political spectacle in the past, despite McCarthy’s claim that it is no place for politics. Two years ago, Beyoncé performed during the Super Bowl halftime show in a Black Panther outfit and her backup dancers held up raised fists. Lady Gaga was permitted to perform at last year’s Super Bowl, even as speculations abounded over whether she was going to get political. And though she kept her performance largely apolitical, the NFL had no intention of stopping her if she had not.

In fact, when reports came out stating that the NFL instructed Lady Gaga to avoid politics during the halftime show, the organization went out of its way to dispute the claims. “This is unsourced nonsense from people trying to stir up controversy where there is none,” an NFL spokesman announced.

Joe Chenelly, national director AMVETS, notes that the NFL’s rejection of the group’s ad proves exactly where the NFL stands on the protests. “Really, by not letting us run an ad, we think they are taking a position,” he said.

Meanwhile, the protests’ impact on NFL viewership cannot be disputed. According to a study by the Remington Research Group, 51 percent of respondents stated that they’ve watched less football as a result of the protests. Eighty percent said they would like sporting events to be less political, and 60 percent stated that the National Anthem at NFL games was an inappropriate place to protest.

Image: Screenshot from amvets.org



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