



Senator Feinstein Announces Plans to Explore Legislative Options to Keep the San Francisco 49ers in San Francisco

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Washington, DC – At a hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee this morning, U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) announced her intention to explore legislative options to keep the San Francisco 49ers in San Francisco.

Specifically, Senator Feinstein said that she is considering a measure to grant a limited antitrust exemption to the National Football League (NFL), which would essentially require approval by the League for any proposed move of an NFL team.

Senator Feinstein also announced that she will introduce legislation barring a franchise from using the name of a city, outside of that jurisdiction, without official approval of the city.

Recent news reports have indicated that the owner of the 49ers franchise, Dr. John York, has expressed interest in moving the team to Santa Clara, while retaining the San Francisco affiliation in name only. Senator Feinstein, a former mayor of San Francisco, said she intends to fight in every way possible to keep the 49ers in the City.

The following are the Senator's opening remarks, as delivered, at a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on competition in sports programming this morning:

“Mr. Chairman, I am a big NFL fan. I was mayor of San Francisco for nine years. I had the privilege of going to the Super Bowl several times.

The San Francisco 49ers are a treasured team in San Francisco, and I am very disturbed to learn that the 49ers are countenancing a move outside of the City.

I began to take a look at what's happened. What I find is that with Major League Baseball, you have one move during the past 30 years, and with the National Football League there have been seven during the same period of time.

The Oakland Raiders to Los Angeles in 1982; the Baltimore Colts to Indianapolis in 1984; the St. Louis Cardinals to Tempe in 1988; the Los Angeles Rams to St. Louis in 1994; the Raiders to Oakland, again, in '94; the Cleveland Browns to Baltimore in '96 – and in that case they did not take the name, essentially, with them; the Houston Oilers to Nashville in 1997.

The NFL is very important to big cities of America. It is the great leveler in a diverse city. People come together; they mourn the losses; they share the pride of the wins. Once in a while, they go to the Super Bowl. There is a tremendous investment of the cities of America in their teams.

When a team just announces that it may pull out and go to another community and take the name of the city – and the is the heritage of the city – it causes great consternation.

I have my staff looking at the law. It is my view that the league should approve all moves. It is my view that these constant moves are not healthy for the communities. And I have deep concern over the taking of the name of the team – in this case the San Francisco 49ers.

The 49er is the tradition of the city. San Francisco is the city of the gold rush. This has been with us for more than 100 years. You can't move to Santa Clara and call yourself a 49er – you're not. And you certainly can't call yourself the San Francisco 49ers – you're not.

So it seems to me that we ought to look at legislation which would prohibit the taking of a city's name outside of its jurisdiction without the approval of that city. I've always contended that major league sports aren't like Post Toasties; they aren't a commodity. They represent a very ethereal, general concept that so deeply enriches a city. I was passionate about this when I was mayor. And I am passionate about this as a United States Senator.

Last week, I brought together the owner of the 49ers, whom I respect very much, John York -- I've known the family for a very long time – and the Mayor, Gavin Newsom, to try to see if discussions could resume. And I believe they will resume. I understand the Mayor may be meeting with Dr. York again Wednesday, and I am very hopeful that something can be worked out.

But this United States Senator intends to fight every way I possibly can to keep the San Francisco 49ers in San Francisco, and to see that this kind of move, of just picking up and leaving the City, can really be modified to the point where the city, if the name is going to go, the city gives some approval.”

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