

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2507

March 12, 2025

Mr. Rob Manfred
Commissioner
Major League Baseball

Dear Commissioner Manfred,

I have grave concerns regarding the handling of Trevor Bauer's suspension and his continued absence from Major League Baseball (MLB).

As you are aware, Mr. Bauer was suspended for 324 games; the longest non-lifetime suspension in the history of the league—despite the fact that the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office declined to pursue criminal charges against him, citing insufficient evidence. Furthermore, a Los Angeles Superior Court judge denied a restraining order sought by the accuser, while also determining that the accuser filed a materially misleading petition with the Court in describing her interactions with Mr. Bauer. And while Mr. Bauer's suspension was ultimately reduced to 194 games and the arbitrator immediately reinstated him so that he could play in the upcoming season, Mr. Bauer went unsigned over the last two off-seasons, effectively making his 194-game suspension a lifetime one.

Given that no legal action was taken against Mr. Bauer, I am concerned his absence may be tied to certain political statements he made that diverged from prevailing league orthodoxy, as well as statements he made that were critical of MLB and particularly you. Specifically, in 2016, Mr. Bauer publicly expressed positive views about then-candidate Donald J. Trump, including comments on social media praising Trump's campaign rhetoric and outsider status. Additionally, Mr. Bauer, in responding to a social media post, noted his belief that disrespecting fellow human beings should not be tolerated, which was taken as an opposition to MLB's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies. And lastly, Mr. Bauer made a number of remarks prior to his suspension critical of MLB and specifically you, ranging from expanded playoffs, the marketing of MLB players, to the then refusal of MLB to investigate pitchers using sticky substances.

In contrast, consider Marcell Ozuna, who was suspended for just 20 games in 2021 for violating MLB's domestic violence policy after his arrest for aggravated assault and battery against his wife. Despite the serious nature of his arrest, Ozuna returned to the Atlanta Braves in 2022 and remains actively rostered, even earning accolades like the

2024 Silver Slugger Award. This disparate treatment appears even more egregious considering that prior to his suspension Ozuna had a history of violent conduct, which resulted in his payment of hundreds of thousands of dollars to an individual he punched during a flight at a strip club in East St. Louis in July 2014—conduct that MLB was no doubt aware of when they rendered his agreed-upon suspension. While Ozuna’s case involved a shorter suspension and a completed diversion program, the disparity is stark: Bauer, with no charges filed, who challenged his suspension, faces an indefinite exclusion, while Ozuna, with a documented arrest and an acknowledged history of violence, who did not challenge his suspension, thrives in the league.

Given the timing and severity of Mr. Bauer’s suspension, it is reasonable to question whether MLB’s actions were influenced more by his political stances and criticisms of you and MLB than by the allegations against him, which have since been undermined by judicial review and evidentiary shortcomings.

Transparency is essential to maintaining the integrity of any institution, especially one as historically significant and impactful as MLB. Therefore, I formally request that MLB provide my office with detailed, written responses addressing the following questions while also making clear and public answers available to ensure accountability to the American public:

1. Did anyone in MLB, (to include its Investigations Division) communicate, either formally or informally, with Mr. Bauer’s then club, the Los Angeles Dodgers, regarding its investigation, suspension, and arbitration proceedings with Mr. Bauer, and then after Mr. Bauer’s suspension was reduced and he was reinstated, about the Los Angeles Dodgers’ decision to keep or release Mr. Bauer?
2. Was there any communication, formal or informal, between anyone in MLB, (to include its Investigations Division) and its franchises regarding Mr. Bauer’s suspension, investigation, arbitration proceedings and/or the potential of signing Mr. Bauer?
3. Has anyone in MLB engaged in any actions that may have discouraged or dissuaded teams from signing Mr. Bauer?
4. Does MLB have a formal process in place to ensure that reinstated players receive fair opportunities to return to the league?
5. At any time, either before or after his suspension, did anyone in MLB communicate with Mr. Bauer or his club about curtailing or suppressing his political beliefs?

Mr. Bauer's case is not just about one player. It sets a precedent for how MLB adjudicates disciplinary matters and handles player reintegration. The American public, and especially the millions of baseball fans who invest their time and money into the sport, deserve a transparent explanation of the league's actions.

I urge MLB to respond to these concerns in a timely and forthright manner. If the league stands by its handling of this case, it should have no issue providing clear answers to the questions above. The integrity of the sport depends on accountability, fairness, and transparency.

I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Burlison". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and "B".

Eric Burlison
Member of Congress