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How to improve Indy's 2011 Super Bowl

Feb. 4, 2007, will be a day fondly remembered in Indianapolis for generations to come. It was the day the Indianapolis Colts emerged victorious from Super Bowl XLI. The Super Bowl media exposure, combined with the city's proud history of organizing and hosting some of the world's largest sporting events, should position us well to serve as host for the 2011 Super Bowl.



**BRIAN
WILLIAMS**

Commentary

Already, a host committee has been formed and seed funds committed. The General Assembly has passed legislation permitting the NFL, in the event it selects Indianapolis to host a Super Bowl, to be exempt from retail taxes on tangible personal property or services, as is required by the NFL of any city that hosts a Super Bowl.

The NFL is a \$6-billion-a-year business. If it were based in Indiana, it would be the state's fifth-largest company. The average annual salary for a player is \$1.1 million. The average NFL team is worth \$625 million. The NFL commissioner and the head of the players' union both earn at least twice what the average player earns. Clearly, the NFL does not need government help.

And yet, to successfully host a Super Bowl, huge amounts of public infrastructure, resources and people are required, the vast majority of which are funded by taxpayers. The stadium, roads, airports, hotels and sewers were all built with or supported by tax dollars. Most important, the police, fire and emergency crews, who will undoubtedly work overtime and who will be there to ensure the safety of all involved, are paid with tax dollars.

Fortunately, the economic impact of a Super Bowl in Indianapolis, an estimated \$262 million, should more than replenish the city's treasury if Indianapolis is selected to host the game. How much greater would the economic impact of the game be if Indiana did not have to give the NFL a tax break?

Since the first Super Bowl between the Green Bay Packers and Kansas City Chiefs in 1967, many astute managers and team owners have built the NFL into a financial powerhouse on the blocks, tackles and runs of its players. Common sense tells you that playing in the NFL is physically demanding and that many players retire due to disabling injuries.

The NFL should realize that the economic and cultural extravaganza that is the Super Bowl owes a great deal to the men who played before. Unfortunately, many of those who have retired with disabilities from the game cannot collect

disability from the league, are financially strapped and are, in many cases, medically and psychologically challenged.

The needs of these retired players are in some cases so great that recently Mike Ditka and Jerry Kramer organized the Gridiron Greats Assistance Fund to help their former teammates and adversaries struggling with post-football health and economic issues.

The NFL deserves some credit for increasing its contributions and commitments to retired players. It should do much more. For example, in 2005, NFL Charities donated \$390,000 to "help players in times of need." The NFL Alumni Dire Need Trust in 2004 paid out only \$143,694 to 22 players.

Super Bowl XLV will be a great event in Indianapolis. In Indiana, we remember our sports heroes long after their playing days are through. For example, Landon Turner still has a seat for every Indiana University home game. Maybe the Indianapolis host committee should challenge the NFL to match the tax break they demand we give them with a donation by the NFL of an equal or greater amount to former players in need. The party in Indianapolis in 2011, the game and the players will all be much better for it. •

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