

FACT SHEET

District of Columbia v. Pro-Football, Inc., d/b/a Washington Commanders, et al.

Background

District of Columbia Attorney General Karl Racine is **filing a lawsuit on behalf of the District of Columbia against the Washington Commanders, Dan Snyder, the NFL, and NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell to hold them accountable for their misrepresentations to District consumers about an independent investigation into the Commanders' systemic toxic workplace.** The complaint was filed in Superior Court for the District of Columbia on November 10, 2022.

Faced with allegations of sexual harassment, verbal abuse, and other misconduct in the Commanders' workplace, the Defendants promised to fully cooperate with an independent investigation. These statements were misleading, and the Defendants failed to disclose additional important information to consumers. Their deception was designed to maintain their strong fanbase in the District, ensuring their pockets stayed lined while the Commanders worked to thwart the investigation and suppressed the investigation's results to prevent the truth from coming to light.

The Parties

Plaintiff is the District of Columbia, through the Office of the Attorney General. The Complaint names as Defendants Pro-Football, Inc., doing business as the Washington Commanders, owner Daniel Snyder, the National Football League, and NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell.

General Factual Narrative

When the *Washington Post* first detailed allegations of a toxic workplace and sexual harassment in 2020, Dan Snyder and the Commanders professed ignorance, painting Mr. Snyder as too "hands-off" to adequately protect his employees. They announced that attorney Beth Wilkinson would investigate the veracity of these allegations. In reality, Mr. Snyder was well aware of toxic culture because he not only condoned it, he created it. Mr. Snyder was also at the center of the increasing sexualization of the Commanders cheerleaders, and he personally ordered the creation of voyeuristic videos of nude and partially nude cheerleaders using footage recorded without those cheerleaders' knowledge or consent.

As new facts continued to emerge and public outrage escalated, the Defendants announced the NFL would take over control of Wilkinson's investigation. Defendants framed this as an effort to ensure District consumers and the public could be confident that the inquiry would be thorough, unbiased, and trustworthy. However, behind the scenes, the Commanders and the NFL entered into a secret agreement that formalized their "common interest" in the investigation and gave Mr. Snyder control over the public release of its findings.

Defendants' actions during the investigation contradicted representations the Commanders, Mr. Snyder, the NFL, and Commissioner Goodell made to District consumers. With the NFL and Commissioner Goodell's knowledge, Mr. Snyder tried to interfere with the investigation and prevented detailed findings from ever going public. All the while, Defendants maintained the façade of their cooperation with the investigation. Defendants' deception was designed to protect their bottom line, ensuring their pockets stayed lined at the expense of District consumers who were denied the right to make informed choices.

Causes of Action

The District is bringing two civil claims under the District of Columbia's Consumer Protection Procedures Act (CPPA), a broad remedial statute establishing an enforceable right to truthful information by merchants, including Defendants.

Against all Defendants, the District is bringing a claim that Defendants misrepresented and failed to disclose material facts to District consumers about their cooperation with the Wilkinson investigation and their coordination to suppress the publication of the investigation's findings, in violation of the CPPA.

Against Mr. Snyder and the Commanders, the District is bringing a claim that Mr. Snyder and the team misled the public as to their knowledge of, and Mr. Snyder's participation in, the Commanders' toxic and hostile work environment, in violation of the CPPA.

Alleged Harms

District consumers are the Commanders' target fanbase, and Defendants' misrepresentations and omissions had a tendency to mislead District consumers. The District is seeking the full array of relief available under the CPPA, including restitution, injunctive relief, and civil financial penalties.