

**Washington, DC (September 12, 2012)** – Today, Congressman Gus Bilirakis (FL-09), Co-Chair of the Military Veterans' Caucus, brought together NFL Commissioner Goodell, U.S. Army Vice Chief of Staff General Austin, the Brain Injury Task Force and Members of Congress to discuss traumatic brain injuries and ways they could partner to break down the stigma associated with head injuries. Following the discussion, Congressman Bilirakis issued the following statement:

“Head injuries are the signature - and oftentimes invisible - wounds of war. They are not a sign of weakness or a character flaw, but rather the catalyst of other more serious illnesses, including Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

“Through advancements in research, diagnostics and treatment, we hope to learn more about head injuries and how we can better diagnose and treat our service members and athletes both on and off the field.

“I would like to thank NFL Commissioner Goodell, U.S. Army Vice Chief of Staff General Austin, my fellow Members of the Military Veterans' Caucus and the Brain Injury Task Force for their participation in this effort. I look forward to working with them as we work toward these common goals.”

NFL Commissioner Goodell, U.S. Army Vice Chief of Staff General Austin and Military Veterans' Caucus Co-Chair Congressman Thompson also provided the following remarks:

*NFL Commissioner Goodell:* “We appreciate the leadership of Reps. Bilirakis and Thompson and the participation of General Austin and two dozen members of Congress. Working together we can lead in raising awareness on this issue that affects players in all sports, our men and women in the armed forces, and the broader public.”

*U.S. Army Vice Chief of Staff General Austin:* “We have made great strides in recent years in our efforts to better prevent, diagnose and treat traumatic brain injuries. TBI affects a significant portion of our population, and not just within our military ranks or among professional athletes, but across society as a whole. What we do know is that with proper physical and mental rest,

the vast majority of individuals who experience a TBI will fully recover. And so, our goal is to continue to educate folks and to pursue the kinds of partnerships, like the one we share with the NFL, that will lead to further advances sooner in the areas of research, science & technology and treatment methods. The outcomes will benefit our servicemen and women, athletes at all levels and the approximately 1.7 million people in the U.S. who sustain a traumatic brain injury each year."

*Military Veterans' Caucus Co-Chair Congressman Thompson:* "Too many American heroes defending our nation overseas, and too many athletes who give their heart and soul to our nation's most popular sport are suffering from traumatic brain injuries. We need a public-private partnership that brings together the resources and best research to develop the technology and equipment needed to best prevent brain injury. Working together with leaders in Congress, the NFL and Army we can make smart investments in the kind of equipment and technology that will drastically reduce traumatic brain injury.

According to the U.S. Departments of Defense and Health and Human Services, between 2000 and 2012, more than 253,000 service members have been diagnosed with TBI. Outside the military, nearly 2 million people across our country suffer a TBI each year, including NFL players and athletes of all ages and sports.

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