

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Congressman Mike Pence submitted the following statement into the record of the U.S. House of Representatives in opposition to an amendment that would limit the ability of the Armed Services to pursue various recruitment efforts:

"Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to the amendment offered by my colleagues, Rep. McCollum and Rep. Kingston. And let me say that while I wholeheartedly agree to the notion that this body must take the lead in putting our nation back on the path towards fiscal responsibility, the move to prohibit our military services from advancing recruitment and retention goals through various athletic sponsorships is unwise.

"At a time when the men and women of our Armed Forces are undertaking operations around the world, we must not move to end the successful platforms used by the Department of Defense to recruit able men and women into their ranks.

"Contrary to popular belief, these sponsorships also go far beyond driver appearances, commercials and decals on race cars. In fact, the National Guard's sponsorship of the Panther Racing IndyCar team has not only been successful in raising the Guard's profile and getting it in front of potential recruits, but also technology transfers between these entities will allow for our service members to be better protected when downrange.

"J.R. Hildebrand, who drives the National Guard IndyCar, wears ear sensors that measure the G-forces he experiences during a crash on the racetrack. Those sensors, known as an Integrated Blast Effects Sensor System, are now worn by troops in harm's way. The information gathered can be very useful to neurosurgeons who treat soldiers suffering from Traumatic Brain Injury, often the result of roadside bomb attacks.

"Understanding the nature and effects of Traumatic Brain Injury advances the ways in which we protect and treat our fighting men and women, and those same sensors worn by J.R. Hildebrand have a direct benefit to our troops in Afghanistan. Furthermore, helmet technologies developed in IndyCar and the National Football League have been adapted for military use. And these represent just a few of the results from the military's sponsorships, or partnerships with professional sports.

"As our service members return to civilian life, they are often faced with a continuing unemployment crisis. In partnership with the National Guard, Panther Racing continues to work with the Employer Support of the National Guard (ESGR) program, an agency within the Department of Defense designed to connect citizen soldiers with employers. Panther Racing continues to work with the Chamber of Commerce to support the Hiring our Heroes program. At race events across the country, the National Guard partnership with Panther Racing brings military members and their spouses together with CEO's of local businesses and ultimately helping get our nation's veterans back to work.

"Mr. Chairman, utilizing military partnerships with professional sports can be a vital tool in improving the lives and care of our service men and women. The results of these programs speak for themselves. Amendments similar to the one currently before this body have been rejected by wide margins and I urge my colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, to stand with those who wear the uniform and oppose the McCollum/Kingston amendment."