

Testimony of

Mr. Keith Tribble

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STATEMENT OF KEITH R. TRIBBLE,
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, ORANGE BOWL COMMITTEE
CHAIRMAN, FOOTBALL BOWL ASSOCIATION
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UNITED STATES SENATE
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Chairman Hatch, Ranking Member Leahy and other distinguished members of the Committee, my name is Keith R. Tribble, and I am the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Orange Bowl Committee, a not-for-profit member organization that produces the annual FedEx Orange Bowl game and its ancillary events. I also serve and appear here today as the Chairman of the Football Bowl Association and its membership of 28 individual Bowls, most of which are non-profit organizations. On behalf of the Orange Bowl Committee and the Football Bowl Association, I would like to thank you for allowing me to appear before you today to discuss the merits as well as preservation of the Division I-A college football Bowl structure.

(Although the Orange Bowl is a participant in the Bowl Championship Series, I am not appearing here today in that BCS capacity.)

Over the last quarter century, I have had the opportunity to participate in collegiate athletics and the Bowl system from three separate and unique perspectives, as a football player at the University of Florida under Coach Doug Dickey, as a collegiate athletics administrator at Florida and the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, and as a Bowl executive with the former Blockbuster Bowl and currently with the Orange Bowl Committee.

I have led the Orange Bowl Committee organization since 1993 after spending two years as the Senior Associate Athletic Director at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). Prior to UNLV, I spent 1990-92 as Executive Director of Sunshine Festival Football, Inc., overseeing the creation and development of the Blockbuster Bowl, which later became the Tangerine Bowl, in Orlando. My first foray into collegiate athletics came at my alma mater, the University of Florida, where I worked from 1981-89, eventually rising to Associate Athletic Director.

Orange Bowl Committee

The mission of the Orange Bowl Committee (OBC) is to maintain a self-sustaining, independent organization supporting and producing activities and events which enhance the image, economy, and culture of South Florida. To this end, the Orange Bowl Festival involves approximately 100 events annually, in the areas of athletics, entertainment, community programs and charitable fundraisers. In addition, the OBC annually gives back to the community through the Orange Bowl Foundation, the charitable arm of the organization, whose main purpose is to fund youth athletic endeavors and scholarships.

Football Bowl Association

The Football Bowl Association (FBA) was formed in 1983 to provide a forum for Bowl issues, to ensure that the quality of the Bowls is maintained, and to promote the continuing respect for the Bowls within intercollegiate athletics. There are currently 28 individual postseason Bowl games that comprise the FBA.

To successfully stage a community-based bowl festival, Bowl organizations are comprised of two key areas: (1) human resources and (2) financial support.

Human Resources for a Bowl Organization

Three core human resource groups are critical to effective staging of a Bowl game and festival: (1) volunteers, (2) employees and (3) business vendors:

To begin, Bowl volunteerism can be defined in two key areas: (a) committee membership and (b) community volunteers. At the OBC, our membership consists of 304 community and business leaders, including Senators Bob Graham and Bill Nelson and Governor Jeb Bush. The OBC organization is managed under the direction of 23 members of the Board of Directors. The OBC ambassador program is annually comprised of up to 1,000 community-based volunteers. These individuals represent the diverse composition of the Florida community.

Secondly, employment at Bowl organizations is categorized by two classifications: (a) full-time and (b) non full-time. At the OBC, there are currently 24 full-time employees who are responsible for the day-to-day management of the organization. To support their efforts, the OBC provides opportunities for a minimum of 16 non full-time employees for either work experience and/or college credit, and internships. As the CEO, I am responsible for the organization's overall administration including, but not limited to, executive, business, corporate sales, ticket sales, marketing, communications, ticket operations, event operations and membership services.

The final component to assist the Bowl's committee membership, volunteer base and staff is with the support of business vendors. These arrangements are comprised through two key areas: (a) tourism and (b) operational partnerships. Tourism alliances include, but are not limited to, hotel, restaurant and transportation industries. Operational support is secured through relationships which include, among others, stadium facilities, as well as product and service companies. At the OBC, business partnerships have been secured in the hotel, restaurant and transportation areas, as well as the cruise industry.

Financial Support for a Bowl Organization

To effectively fund a successful Bowl festival and game, financial support comes from four primary sources: (1) ticket sales, (2) corporate sponsorships, (3) broadcast partners and (4) governmental alliances:

To begin, the viability of a Bowl game rests on its ability to generate local ticket sales. Each individual Bowl must develop an effective marketing and promotions campaign that targets the make-up of its individual constituency. It is important to note that the success of each bowl's annual ticket sales has a direct impact on the organizing committee's ability to fund its festival the following year. At the OBC, an effective campaign targeting our diverse population has been successful in securing approximately 2,800 ticket patron accounts.

In order to underwrite a Bowl and festival, the host Bowl organization must also secure the support of corporate sponsorships, locally, regionally and nationally. For the Orange Bowl Festival, the OBC has successfully secured approximately 150 corporate partners.

Moreover, each Bowl organization must secure national distribution of its property through an effective partnership with national television and radio. (Without such national exposure the viability of the bowls will be threatened.) Through our successful participation in the Bowl Championship Series, the OBC was able to secure a national television and radio partnership for the FedEx Orange Bowl with ABC Sports and ESPN Radio, respectively.

Finally, each Bowl organization must engage the support of local and regional governmental partners. This includes city, county, state and tourism agencies. At the OBC, we have been successful in securing the support of local government as well as local and state tourism agencies.

Merits of the Postseason Collegiate Bowl System

I appear before you today in response to the on-going discussion taking place among selected Division I-A university presidents and football conference commissioners, as well as various collegiate administrators, the sports media, and college football fans regarding the overall merits of our current Bowl system.

Bowl Games Are College Football

This college football season, 26 communities around the nation will host 28 postseason Bowl games; two communities - Orlando and New Orleans - host two postseason games each. Approximately 5,600 student-athletes, 11,000 college band members, 1,100 cheerleaders, 50,000 to 100,000 additional performers and millions of fans and community members will take part in the tradition and pageantry of the annual "College Bowl Experience."

The top two teams in the Bowl Championship Series rankings will square-off in the National Championship Game, this year in the Nokia Sugar Bowl in New Orleans, Louisiana. The BCS ranking, popularly debated and questioned, includes not only the two most notable poll systems, from the editorial staff of the Associated Press and from the Division I-A head coaches who make up the ESPN/USA Today edition, but also six computer polls and the objectivity of team records and strength of schedule of each team.

In my quarter-century associated with the sport of college football, the postseason college football Bowl experience is something I personally do not want to see diminished during the prolonged discussions regarding our Bowl system and its ability to bring finality to the college football season. Half of the 56 qualifying teams will come away from these games as Bowl champions and take with them a feeling of reward that will last throughout the following spring practice period and into the approaching season, as well as for the rest of their lives.

Bowls Provide New and Unique Experiences

The rewarding experience that all participating groups enjoy during their Bowl week is perfectly captured in the unique events and visits that are scheduled by the host organization that could not be found in any abbreviated postseason stay. For example, the participating teams at the FedEx Orange Bowl visit the beautiful sandy shores from Ft. Lauderdale to South Beach as well as the unique cultural aspects of South Florida. In Tampa, the Outback Bowl sponsors trips to the Florida Aquarium and Busch Gardens while an hour away the Capitol One Bowl brings teams to the various Disney Parks. Teams get to tour and eat lunch on one of our country's aircraft carriers during their stay at the Pacific Life Holiday Bowl in San Diego. Players participate in the NCAA Yes Football Clinic during their trip to the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl in Tempe. The Alamo Bowl presented by MasterCard takes their teams to the site of the birthplace of the state of Texas at the Alamo in San Antonio. The gates of Alcatraz open once again as the Diamond Walnut San Francisco Bowl tours its teams through this historic monument of American Justice. When at the Hawaii Bowl, participating players get to visit historic Pearl Harbor in the day and witness a true Hawaiian ritualistic Luau at night. And there is much more.

Financial Contributions to Higher Education

This upcoming Bowl season, 28 college Bowls will distribute more than \$185 million to NCAA schools. During the past five years, almost \$800 million has been paid out and the Bowls will conservatively payout more than \$2.1 billion over the next 10 years. Since almost all Bowl games are produced by non-profit organizations, the more revenue the Bowl brings in through ticket sales, sponsors, etc., the more money can be paid to these institutions of higher education.

The FedEx Orange Bowl paid out a combined \$28,666,666 in 2003 to its participating institutions and conferences and is projected to payout to its participants \$29,500,000 following the 2004 game. Over the past 10 years, the FedEx Orange Bowl has paid out a just short of \$200 million and, through its history, the Orange Bowl has paid out a total of nearly \$300 million to its participant institutions.

Increased Fan Attendance

Total attendance at Bowl games increased this past year as a record of more than 1.42 million fans attended 28 Bowl games. The average attendance of the Bowl stadiums was 84.7 percent of capacity. Seventeen Bowls were at least 89 percent filled. Ten Bowls were at least 99 percent filled. Average attendance of Bowls in existence at least five years has also increased the same for Bowls that have been around at least 10 or 25 years. This proves that even the increasing number of Bowl games have met with critical local approval. On average, these games are more popular today than ever. Every New Year's Day Bowl and BCS Bowl was an official sellout in 2002-03. The FedEx Orange Bowl sold out for the third consecutive season in 2003 with 75,971 in attendance. With a projected sellout for the upcoming 2004 game, and the succeeding BCS National Championship Game in 2005, the FedEx Orange Bowl will have five consecutive sellouts for the first time.

Benefits from Media Exposure

The excitement and visibility created by participating in Bowl games can generate increases in donations, licensing revenues, television contracts, season ticket sales and other long term revenue streams. Schools have even reported increased enrollment applications which they attribute in part to a Bowl appearance. Last year's total television viewership increased from the previous year, the second highest of the past five years. The combined television audience for the 28 Bowls was 117 million households spread out over six networks, including ABC, NBC, CBS, FOX, ESPN and ESPN 2. Ten games saw increases in television viewership and BCS game ratings were up 10.2 percent.

Economic Impact on the Host Community

Bowls are a boost for the local economy, help promote the local tourism industry, and are a point of civic pride with hundreds of active volunteers and/or ambassadors. This past Bowl season, 28 Bowl games generated an estimated \$1.1 billion dollars worth of economic impact for their host communities. This does not include the value of media exposure. Twenty-six communities hosting Bowl games provide stability and an unparalleled commitment to provide not only funding but a quality experience to the teams and fans. The FedEx Orange Bowl also involves the entire community which has the opportunity to share in the Bowl's pageantry, tradition and success during the December holiday season, not to mention, throughout the calendar year.

According to Sport Management Research Institute (SMRI), the 2000-2001 Orange Bowl Festival, which included the FedEx Orange Bowl National Championship football game, generated an economic impact of \$107.3 million to the South Florida area. An additional \$77.5 million in added promotional value was derived from staging the Orange Bowl Festival during a National Championship year. The indirect and induced economic impacts increased by more than three percent, along with more than \$7 million generated by local, state and federal taxes. In addition, the opportunity to showcase the Bowl venue has a continuing impact on the venue's tourism and economy far past any individual game.

Charitable Responsibility

Bowls benefit not only NCAA institutions but local causes and charities. Many Bowls contribute in excess of \$100,000 annually to charitable causes and many host camps for disadvantaged youth. A small sample of charities benefiting from Bowl activity include the Boys & Girls Clubs, numerous hospitals, YMCA, local education programs through elementary and high schools, college scholarship programs, the United Way, Make-A-Wish Foundation and the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

With proceeds from ticket sales to the 2002 FedEx Orange Bowl, the Orange Bowl Foundation (OBF) was able to honor and provide for victims of September 11. The OBF helped a single father of three kids, who was laid off by a local hotel and was on the verge of being homeless by paying his bills in the month of December. The OBF then partnered with the Salvation Army of Miami-Dade and Broward counties to help non-chronic homeless in South Florida affected by the events of 9/11. As a lasting memorial, the OBF also awarded \$30,000 to renovate the Coconut Grove Sailing Center. This center is host of the Shake-A- Leg Program, which works with handicapped children and with which we have a long-standing relationship with our only water-related event; the Sailing Regatta.

The OBF also donates \$25,000 annually to the Orange Bowl Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund, benefiting high school seniors wanting to attend historically black colleges and universities. Over the last three years, the foundation has donated more than \$75,000.

In partnership with the Kiwanis Club of Little Havana, the OBF initiated a Scholarship Endowment Fund. The OBF contributed \$25,000 for four straight years to be matched dollar-for-dollar by Kiwanis to create a \$200,000 permanent fund that will endow scholarships in perpetuity. The Orange Bowl/Kiwanis Fund awarded full tuition and books to two students.

Five years ago, the OBC created the Orange Bowl Youth Football League (OBYFL), a regional partnership between independent parks sponsoring youth football and cheerleading. The OBYFL represents 70,000 stakeholders, including 20,000 tacklers, 10,000 cheerleaders and 40,000 coaches, parents and volunteers. Throughout the state, the OBC underwrites the staging of postseason competitions as well as marketing programs including a weekly television show, newsletter, website and promotional activities. For the last three years, the OBF has also issued grants to the participants of the OBYFL. The seven individual leagues have been awarded more than \$60,000 over the last three seasons, to be used for expenses incurred during their football seasons leading up to the Orange Bowl-funded "Bowl Before The Bowl" and "Cheer to the FedEx Orange Bowl" championship events.

Conclusion

All 26 Bowl organizations throughout the country work throughout the year within their respective communities to produce an experience memorable to the student-athletes, universities and their supporting fan bases. Through 28 Bowl games and 26 host communities, 56 individual institutions experience the virtues of the current Bowl system. As outlined in this testimony, these benefits include the new and unique experiences that each bowl site has to offer to the student-athlete, the tremendous financial contribution annually to higher education, the opportunity for millions of fans nationwide to attend games and celebrate the pageantry and tradition of what we know as college football, the increased national exposure each institution gains from its postseason appearances, the substantial economic impact to the host community and participants, and the charitable contributions that Bowls provide within their respective communities. On behalf of the Football Bowl Association and the Orange Bowl Committee, I'd like to thank you for allowing me to appear before you today.