



Illinois General Assembly

March 11, 2011

Cross, Raoul team up with the Bears, '85 Super Bowl Champs Dent and Becker to pass concussion education legislation

(Chicago) With Soldier Field in Chicago as the backdrop today, Illinois House Minority Leader Tom Cross (R-Oswego) and Sen. Kwame Raoul (D-Chicago) team up with 1985 Super Bowl Champs Richard Dent, Otis Wilson and Kurt Becker as well as NFL executives, the Illinois High School Association, and Northwestern Memorial Hospital to push legislation through the Senate that tackles the vital issue of concussion education.

“The sports community has really stepped up to the plate to help us bring awareness to this vitally important issue of concussion education,” said Cross. “With Sen. Raoul’s help and leadership in the Senate we will make concussion education a requirement for our student athletes and their parents.”

“I truly appreciate Leader Cross’s unwavering devotion to raising the profile of concussion education,” said Raoul. “From little league football to the NFL, and all levels and types of sports, we must do what we can in state government to make sure that girls and boys, men and women better protect themselves from potentially life-altering head injuries.”

The legislation aims to require all school boards, including the Chicago Board of Education, to adopt a policy regarding student athlete concussions and head injuries including:

- Requires the policy to be in compliance with the protocols, policies, and by-laws of the IHSA.
- Requires that information on the school board’s concussion and head injury policy be a part of any agreement, contract, code, or other written instrument that a school district requires a student athlete and his or her parents or guardians to sign before participating in practice or interscholastic competition.
- Requires the IHSA to make available to all school districts, including elementary school districts, education materials, such as visual presentations and other written materials that describe the nature and risk of concussions and head injuries.

After the bill passes the House and the Senate, it will head to the Governor’s desk to be signed into law.



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Many current and former professional athletes, top NFL executives, medical professionals, high school representatives and other interested associations are supporting this effort:

"To help protect all NFL players from the dangers of brain and other injuries, I recently joined the Brain Injury Association of Illinois' Board of Directors to help extend our reach beyond the 1,800 players in NFL locker rooms. The standard set by our league inevitably affects policy at other levels. The advances in diagnosis and treatment of concussions means future generations of athletes will enjoy better long-term health and fewer short-term risks as a result. HB 200 and SB 150 are important legislation that will make the future safer for young athletes all across our state."

- - Hunter Hillenmeyer, an eight year veteran with the Chicago Bears, also served on the NFL Players Association's TBI Committee and Player Safety and Welfare Committee, Brain Injury Association of Illinois Board Member

"We are proud to support legislation dedicated to educating and protecting athletes at the youth and high school levels. Understanding and preventing concussions in all sports is vital and we commend Leader Cross and Senator Raoul for their leadership on this issue."

- - Ted Phillips, Chicago Bears' President and CEO

"The NFL has strict return-to-play guidelines that apply to the best athletes in the world. We believe a similar approach is necessary when dealing with some of the youngest athletes. This legislation does that."

-Ken Edmonds, NFL Dir. of Gov. Relations and Public Policy

"Educating our girls and boys about the risks and symptoms of concussions in elementary and high school is so important to their overall well being. I am fully supportive of efforts to get that done here in Illinois."

- - Richard Dent, 1985 Super Bowl MVP and 2011 NFL Hall of Fame inductee

"As a former NFL player and now a high school coach, concussion education at all levels is vitally important. I fully support these efforts to help our student-athletes have a safer experience in all sports."

-Kurt Becker, 1985 Super Bowl Champion

“I really applaud Tom Cross and Kwame Raoul for their efforts in pushing this bill at the high school level to protect the youngsters as well as educating the parents and coaches on the long-term effects concussions are having. Any baseline tests you can implement for the well being of the student athlete are a must.”

--Mike Ditka, Chairman of the Gridiron Greats Assistance Fund

“The proposals under consideration by the General Assembly take important steps toward raising awareness of the seriousness of concussions on our children and providing a layer of protection for our youth athletes. Most importantly, these proposals help to protect our youth athletes from additional harm by preventing their return to practice or play until they are fully recovered. Ultimately, a new athletic culture will be created, one in which all players, parents, coaches and others supervisors know that any symptoms of a brain injury will result in removal from play.”

*-Dr. Hunt Batjer, Northwestern Memorial Hospital
and NFL Head, Neck and Spine Committee*

“The Illinois High School Association is pleased to work with Representative Tom Cross, Senator Kwame Raoul, and the entire General Assembly on this important legislation. HB 200 will bolster our Association’s efforts to educate and protect the more than 300,000 high school age students who annually participate in interscholastic athletics at their high schools. Our Sports Medicine Committee has provided tremendous guidance in this area and we are well positioned to provide the leadership necessary to enhance our ongoing concussion education and management efforts.”

-Marty Hickman, IHSA Executive Director

“Communication between our physicians, athletic trainers, parents and athletes ensures a safe return to competition. The Sports Medicine team has now evolved to include our legislators who are looking to raise the level of safety awareness regarding these injuries. Educating our parents, coaches, and kids will allow us to break free from the “win at all cost mentality”.

*-Steve McInerney, ATC Oswego High School Athletic Director
and Governmental Affairs Director for the IATA*

“The Illinois Association of Park Districts is committed to disseminating information about this very important health issue.”

-Peter Murphy, Illinois Association of Park Districts’ President and CEO