

HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMERCE,  
TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

PREPARED REMARKS

Robert C. Khayat

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, ladies and gentlemen:

I am Robert Khayat, Chancellor of The University of Mississippi. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you a matter of national interest. Please know that my comments are my own and I am here in an individual capacity. Nothing I say is intended to be representative of the SEC or of the Bowl Championship Presidential Oversight Committee.

The BCS has as its sole reason for existing an effort to determine annually the National College Division IA football champion. There are 11 conferences, Notre Dame, and 116 other universities that now comprise the BCS. The BCS is not an NCAA organization, although each member of the BCS is a member of the NCAA.

It was my privilege to serve as the SEC presidential representative to the BCS Presidential Oversight Committee. Along with Commissioner Mike Slive, I participated in numerous meetings and conference calls regarding the status and future of the BCS.

I will attempt to summarize for you my perceptions regarding the issues, concerns, and opportunities discussed at these sessions.

1. The presidents and chancellors were unanimous in asserting and believing that our first concern must be protecting the academic integrity of our universities. All of us

are opposed to any erosion of our primary mission – providing high quality educational opportunities for all of our students, including our student athletes.

2. All of us are committed to protecting and strengthening our conferences. The SEC enables 5000 student athletes to compete in 20 intercollegiate sports annually and to have opportunities to pursue meaningful academic program. For most of us, football provides funding for all sports – men and women.

3. In the SEC we conduct an annual football championship game in Atlanta. The people of the southeast place a high value on that game. Proof of its importance is found in the fact that the arena is sold out in the spring before anyone knows who the two teams will be.

4. Each of the universities is eligible to participate in post season bowls. Many of the conferences have relationships with more than one bowl.

The NCAA has certified 28 bowls. The communities that host those bowls are heavily invested in the annual games. College football players never forget the experience of bowl participation and university officials know that bowl participation adds great value to the life and reputation of the schools.

Members of the BCS Presidential Oversight Committee repeatedly expressed the importance of protecting and strengthening the bowls.

5. The current BCS format seeks to place the #1 and #2 teams in the end-of-season rankings in the BCS game. The site of the game is rotated among the Orange, Sugar, Fiesta, and Rose Bowls.

6. Following the 2006 bowl games, the format anticipates that the end-of- season #1 and #2 teams will play the BCS championship game one week after the new year's

weekend bowl games. That game is scheduled to be played at Miami, New Orleans, Tempe, and Pasadena. Therefore, each of these cities will host their traditional bowls and every four years the BCS game will be played at one of these sites.

This format was agreed upon by the entire BCS Oversight Committee.

7. As you know, there is a great deal of discussion about a national playoff structure that would extend football season well into January. It is my belief that most if not all presidents and chancellors oppose a playoff format for several reasons:

a. The season would be extended into January and, therefore, intrude upon the spring semester at most schools and the basketball seasons at all schools.

b. There is no reason to believe that a playoff format would produce an undisputed national champion. For example, note that what has become the Final Four first had a 16-team format that evolved to 32 teams, then 64 teams, and now 65 teams.

c. We quickly confront conflict with the first six points above if we move to a playoff system.

d. It is believed that if we pursue an NFL style playoff, some of the uniqueness of college football will be lost.

8. There are a number of presidents and chancellors who would prefer to terminate the BCS rather than compromise academic integrity, the strong traditions of our conferences, or reduce the importance of traditional bowl games.

Perhaps I should end my opening and try to respond to your questions.