

Op-Ed: National Anthem Inspires, Unifies

Every day, we are pummeled with the message that America is divided. Some will tell you that our country is broken, and that our traditions no longer have purpose. I disagree. American symbols like the flag and our national anthem have the power to unite. They remind us that despite our differences, we share a common bond. That is why I joined with Representatives Tony Kurtz and Scott Krug to author the Star Spangled Banner Act. Passage of this bill would ensure the playing of the national anthem before all sporting events held in venues that utilize state funding.

The practice of playing the Star Spangled Banner at sporting events traces its roots back more than a century – even pre-dating the song's adoption as the national anthem. By the mid-20th century, the tradition had taken hold. Recently, however, the anthem has come under fire. NBA owner Mark Cuban garnered support from anti-anthem activists when he stopped playing the song at Dallas Mavericks home games. My bill helps avoid any controversy by being explicitly clear: if state funds are used in the construction or maintenance of the venue, then the teams that utilize it will show respect to our country. Both the Wisconsin American Legion and VFW Department of Wisconsin have expressed their support for the bill.

America is facing challenges – but we have overcome them in the past, and we will again. In 1993, President Bill Clinton said in his inaugural address that “There is nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured by what is right with America.” I think that still holds true today. Our country is unique because our common foundation is not a shared ethnicity or creed. Instead, it is the idea that we are all created equal and entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The national anthem reminds us of who we are, where we came from, and who we want to be as a country. We are the land of the free and the home of the brave – and that is something in which we should continue to take great pride.