



For immediate release
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Westmoreland: Toughen penalties for steroid use

After aggressively questioning Major League Baseball executives at Thursday's House Government Reform Committee's hearing on steroid use, U.S. Rep. Lynn Westmoreland is urging the league to implement tougher penalties for players who test positive for performance-enhancing drugs.

"The executives kept saying they want to implement 'progressive punishment' – to enforce increasingly steep penalties for second and third offenses," Westmoreland said. "I asked baseball's chief labor relations executive, Rob Manfred, if it was 'progressive punishment' when Pete Rose – the all-time hits leader – was banished from baseball for life for gambling on games. I don't think I got a good answer for that.

"Baseball needs to get serious about stamping out the use of illegal steroids and I'm not convinced at this juncture that baseball's self-regulation has worked. I think baseball can learn from the strong example set by the Olympics: If you're caught using steroids, your medals are stripped and you're banned from competition for two years. Now, that's a standard with teeth. That's getting serious about upholding the integrity and purity of the game and protecting public health.

"I had the opportunity before the hearing to meet the families of teenagers who committed suicide after getting hooked on steroids. Their stories are heart-wrenching and as a parent I can only imagine the pain they must feel. I admire them for speaking out about the dangers posed by steroid use, and I hope their message will resonate with young athletes who are using steroids or are considering using steroids. The players who testified before the committee said they'd do whatever they can to educate young athletes about the dangers of steroid use and I hope they'll keep their word. I'm greatly concerned that we've created an atmosphere where aspiring athletes think they have to use substances that will destroy their bodies in order to compete. We can do better than that."

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