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January 14, 2010

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

In the coming months, as you engage in the time-honored tradition of inviting the champions of major sports leagues to visit the White House, you will have an opportunity to honor the best teams and athletes in the country. I write today to respectfully suggest that the Boise State University football team be included among this year's invitees.

The end of another college football season has brought with it a new set of controversies surrounding the Bowl Championship Series (BCS). This year, the BCS has crowned the University of Alabama -- an excellent football team, no doubt deserving of the honor and attention they've received -- as national champions. However, as you know, the NCAA's Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) has yet to institute a playoff system to decide its national champion, leaving fans to speculate whether more than one team is worthy of the sport's top honor, particularly in those years, like this one, when more than one team finishes the season undefeated. In 2009, Boise State's football team had its third undefeated regular season in five years and, on January 4, 2010, capped its season with a Fiesta Bowl victory over a very good and highly-ranked team from Texas Christian University. Indeed, as Senator James Risch recently wrote to you, "the BSU football team showed the country that they are true champions." Yet, even with its perfect season and long track record of success, Boise State was not given an opportunity to play for the national championship due to the nature of the BCS system.

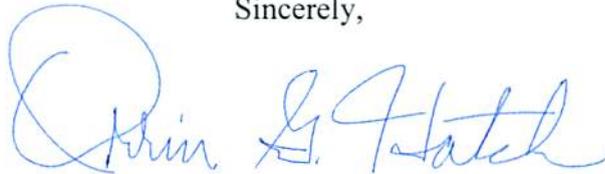
This year's Boise State team is not the first deserving team to be refused an opportunity to compete for the national championship under the BCS. Indeed, just last year, the University of Utah had a similarly impressive run and finished the 2008 season as the only undefeated team in the country, but, due to the BCS's selection criteria, was left out of the national championship picture. True enough, inviting both Alabama and Boise State to the White House this year will not erase the unfairness of the past, nor will it substantively address the ongoing legal, financial, and fundamental fairness concerns that many have regarding the BCS system. But it will send a clear message that champions should be chosen on the field and not in pre-arranged agreements.

Mr. President, in November 2008, while you were the President-elect, you were quoted as saying that, with regard to college football, that "[w]e should be creating a playoff system"

and that you planned to “throw [your] weight around a little bit” on efforts to reform the BCS. In my view, inviting both these great football teams to the White House would be one particularly effective way to do just that. Furthermore, should you only invite Alabama, you would add legitimacy and credibility to a system we both believe to be flawed. That being the case, I hope you will seriously consider this suggestion.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Orrin G. Hatch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "O".

Orrin G. Hatch
United States Senator