

Durbin, MLB Announce New Netting Requirements For All Professional Development League Clubs To Increase Fan Safety

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Major League Baseball (MLB) announced a new requirement today to have extensive protective netting in place at all Professional Development League (PDL) ballparks. The fan safety initiative was adopted at the 2022 Winter Meetings after being unanimously approved by the MLB PDL Executive Board.

In June 2019, after repeated incidents of MLB fans being hit by foul balls, Durbin and U. S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) [wrote](#) to MLB Commissioner Manfred urging him to have all 30 MLB teams extend protective netting to the right and left field corners at all ballparks. In December 2019, MLB [announced](#) that all 30 teams would extend protective netting during the next season. Durbin has [continuously met](#) with baseball safety advocates to discuss fan safety at MLB and Minor League Baseball games.

“In 2019, it was clear something had to be done to protect fans from foul balls being hit at high speeds into the stands. Because of the advocacy of fans and players, MLB made it a requirement to address ballpark safety by extending protective netting well beyond the end of each dugout for the 30 major league teams,” Durbin said. “Now, we are building on the progress made over the last three years so we can also attend minor league games with our kids and grandkids without fear for their safety, no matter where we’re seated. I want to thank MLB and minor league clubs for their efforts on this issue and for heeding my concerns for fan safety.”

“For the last 7 years, injured baseball fans and their families banded together and advocated tirelessly for extended netting at major and minor league ballparks. With Senator Durbin’s leadership, we changed the narrative on stadium safety, galvanizing public opinion to make baseball stadiums safer. Sadly, over that same period, one fan died and scores were permanently injured from foul ball injuries. While I cannot speak for all the others, I am personally grateful that MLB has finally done the right thing by making fan safety a higher priority. A heartfelt thanks to MLB and Senator Durbin for taking these steps to make our National Pastime safer for fans and more family friendly,” said Andy Zlotnick, a fan safety advocate.

“We thank Senator Durbin for his steadfast leadership on this important issue and for his shared commitment towards enhancing fan safety across the PDL system, which has been a goal since the new organizational structure launched in 2021,” said Dan Halem, Deputy Commissioner, Major League Baseball. “Minor League Baseball is an exciting option for families to spend time together and experience professional baseball in an up close and personal way. By taking this action, our PDL Clubs have underscored their commitment to ensuring the safety of fans remains a top priority.”

The requirements—which resulted from a comprehensive review of all 120 PDL ballparks that began several months ago—include the following:

- PDL Clubs are required to install netting from foul pole to foul pole unless the configuration of the ballpark makes such coverage unnecessary.

- The height requirement for the netting from behind home plate to the end of each dugout will be standardized across the PDL system.
- PDL Clubs are to work with their respective facilities to complete installation as soon as practicable but in no event later than 2025 Opening Day.
- Teams will be subject to discipline for non-compliance, including significant fines.

A consultant specializing in stadium architecture and protective netting was retained to help develop and assess compliance with the new mandate. The consultant will also be available to advise Clubs with respect to how to achieve compliance. Previously, decisions concerning the installation of netting were made by each individual PDL Club.

Durbin and Duckworth have also [pushed](#) MLB to collect and report data about fan injuries at MLB baseball stadiums. The Senators believe that releasing this data would help provide the public a better understanding of fan injuries and evaluate the voluntary safety measures that teams are implementing.