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Attorney General Tong Leads Multistate Brief Supporting Supreme Court Challenge to Baseball Antitrust Exemption that Harmed Norwich Sea Unicorns, Dozens of Teams Nationwide

## Press Releases



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### Attorney General Tong Leads Multistate Brief Supporting Supreme Court Challenge to Baseball Antitrust Exemption that Harmed Norwich Sea Unicorns, Dozens of Teams Nationwide

(Hartford, CT) – Attorney General William Tong today led a bipartisan coalition of 18 attorneys general urging the U.S. Supreme Court to hear a challenge to the baseball antitrust exemption, which has unfairly harmed the Norwich Sea Unicorns and dozens of minor league teams nationwide.

The case, *Tri-City Valleycats, Inc. and Oneonta Athletic Corporation v. The Office of the Commissioner of Baseball*, stems from a 2020 agreement among 30 Major League Baseball teams to cut affiliated minor league teams from 160 to 120. In that contraction, the Norwich Sea Unicorns (owned by Oneonta Athletic), the Tri-City Valleycats, and 38 other teams across 23 states lost the ability to compete for Minor League talent and all financial support they had from their Major League affiliates.

In any other sport or business, that unfair horizontal agreement to restrict competition would have been prohibited by state and federal antitrust laws, which are designed to protect consumers and promote competition. But a century-old series of U.S. Supreme Court decisions exempts baseball from all antitrust laws – both state and federal.

The amicus brief argues that the Supreme Court should reverse those antiquated decisions. The brief focuses on the mistake the Supreme Court made by blocking enforcement of state antitrust laws even though Congress never intended to preempt those state laws.

The amicus brief also highlights the powerful economic and cultural role that minor league baseball plays in towns across the United States. Minor League baseball in Norwich drew thousands of residents each spring and summer to watch ascendant professional ballplayers. According to a report by the Norwich Sea Unicorns, their operational expenditures, capital investments, and visitor benefits generate \$52.2 million in economic impact, support 302 local jobs, and generate over \$5.3 million in indirect business taxes every five years.

“Baseball is big business. There’s no rational reason why baseball-- above any other sport, or any other business-- should be insulated from federal and state antitrust enforcement. The Norwich Sea Unicorns deserve the same, fair shot at recruiting talent and Major League support as any other team. It’s time to reconsider and overturn the antiquated and unfair baseball antitrust exemption,” **said Attorney General Tong.**

Attorney General Tong was joined by the attorneys general of Arizona, Colorado, District of Columbia, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia in filing today’s brief.

Click [here](#) to view the brief.

Assistant Attorney General Julián Quiñones, Deputy Associate Attorney General Nicole Demers, Chief of the Antitrust Section, and Solicitor General Joshua Perry assisted the Attorney General in this matter.

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