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Players push for passage of FIT Kids Act

Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- Washington Redskins cornerback DeAngelo Hall says the battle against childhood lethargy extends to his own home.

"Nowadays, kids aren't out playing in the streets and hanging out and having a good time," Hall said at a Capitol Hill news conference Thursday to promote children's fitness legislation. "They're sitting in front of video games, they're eating a lot of fast food. Even my kids -- I'm trying to get them away from that, too."

Hall, who called childhood obesity an epidemic, was one of seven NFL players in town to push for passage of the FIT Kids Act. The bill would require schools, districts and states to report on students' physical activity, and to give youngsters health and nutritional information.

They joined lawmakers, Atlanta Falcons owner Arthur Blank, health advocates, NFL cheerleaders and dozens of schoolchildren for the soggy pep rally, held in a light rain on the West Lawn of the Capitol. Players led the children in jumping jacks, stretching and running-in-place exercises and signed autographs.

"It's insane that kids go to school and we work on their minds, but we don't work on their bodies," said Baltimore Ravens special teams standout Brendon Ayanbadejo. "We need to get kids playing 60 minutes a day."

That was a reference to NFL PLAY 60, a youth health and fitness campaign aimed at getting youngsters active for an hour a day.

"What we're here about is really the future of our country," said Sen. Tom Harkin, an Iowa Democrat who chairs the Agriculture Committee and sponsored the bill in the Senate. Harkin warned that the youth generation could live shorter lives than their parents.

The House sponsor, Rep. Ron Kind, D-Wis., is a former Harvard quarterback.

"It's impossible to develop a healthy mind without a healthy body, and that's what FIT Kids is all about," he said.

Rep. Zach Wamp, R-Tenn., argued that kids are overmedicated, adding that the best antidepressant is sweat.

"The human body was made to move," he said.

Other players at the rally included Ravens Jared Gaither, Jameel McClain, Troy Smith and Marcus Maxwell, and Redskin Fred Smoot.