



JOSEPH D. MORELLE  
Assemblyman 132<sup>nd</sup> District  
Monroe County

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November 17, 2004

Nina Van Erk, Executive Director  
NYS Public High School Athletic Association  
88 Delaware Avenue  
Delmar, New York 12054

Dear Ms. Van Erk:

I have been informed that at the October 4, 2004 meeting the Wrestling Committee of the New York State Public High School Athletic Association voted to consider five different tournament options for high school wrestling. I was very disappointed to learn that the Multiple Entry Proposal that has been suggested was not one of the options to be considered. I am deeply concerned that the five tournament format options being considered still do not address the essential inequality in the state wrestling tournament.

While a couple of the proposals do increase the participation in the tournament, they ignore the fundamental inequality in the sections that make up the NYSPHSAA. Not only would wrestlers still face an unfair qualifying system, but some wrestlers would advance or not qualify solely on the basis of the luck of the draw, not athletic performance determined in competition.

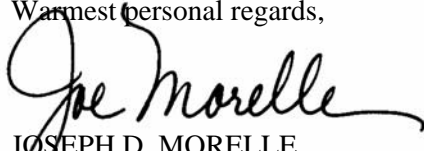
As I have described to you in previous letters, your organization's current voting structure does not provide for proportional representation based on the number of schools in a section. In cases of some sports, where there are vastly disproportionate numbers of schools participating in a particular sport, student athletes in sections with fewer schools enjoy a greater chance to qualify for championship competitions. The impact that this may have on a student's future athletic career, including statewide standing and collegiate recruitment and scholarships, is not justifiable in a public education system.

The five new proposals recently put forward by your organization seem to violate the spirit of high school athletics, where sportsmanship and fair competition should be the standard. Since it is apparent that there is no desire or ability by your office to adopt a tournament format that is as fair as possible and as competitive as possible, I intend to introduce legislation in the upcoming 2005 legislative session to ensure that all athletes have an ability to qualify for such events based on their athletic talent, and performance in qualifying events, rather than geography. I already have secured a sponsor of this legislation in the Senate.

Change is needed to provide student athletes in New York State a fair and equitable ability to compete in state championships. The organizational structure of the NYSPHSAA does not allow for equitable representation of its voting members based on the number of schools each voting member represents. Each section, regardless of the number of participating schools per sport, shares an equal voice in deciding championship standards. This disproportionate representation unfairly discriminates against student athletes from larger sections. My legislation will require equal opportunity for high school athletes to participate in championship events, based solely on athleticism, sportsmanship and performance in qualifying events. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this matter.

If you wish to discuss this issue further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Warmest personal regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Morelle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "e".

JOSEPH D. MORELLE

Chairman

NYS Assembly Committee on Tourism,  
Arts and Sports Development