

The Fairness In Competition Legislation

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Questions and Answers

Why is the “Fairness In Competition Bill” necessary?

The NYSPHSAA state championships are fundamentally unfair and the NYSPHSAA is unwilling to make changes. Currently, entries to state championship events are based on sectional qualifying events where the number of schools competing in each section are severely disproportionate. One section may have two schools competing while another may have more than fifty competing for the right to send one single representative each to the state championships. Clearly, this system unfairly discriminates against students from larger sections, denying them the opportunity to compete at the highest level. Nowhere is this problem more evident than in the sport of wrestling, where many athletes are denied opportunities simply because they happen to come from a large section that fields many competitors.

The New York State Wrestling Coaches Association (NYSWCA) has repeatedly tried to get the NYSPHSAA to recognize the injustice inherent in the current process and make needed reforms. This effort was first rejected by the NYSPHSAA in the 1970's. More recently, in 2000 and again in 2003, the NYSWCA surveyed coaches to find overwhelming support for the multiple-entry concept. The NYSWCA shared these findings with the NYSPHSAA and formally presented proposals detailing the workings and benefits of a multiple-entry system. The NYSPHSAA countered by re-surveying coaches in 2004 but deliberately failed to include the NYSWCA multiple-entry proposals in their survey.

Finally, Assemblyman Joe Morelle has repeatedly corresponded with and personally met with NYSPHSAA representatives to point out the unfairness in the current system and encouraged them to make reforms and adopt a multiple-entry system on their own as other states have done.

None of these efforts have resulted in even an acknowledgement by the NYSPHSAA that the current system is fundamentally unfair, much less a commitment to reform, thereby making state legislation necessary.

What will the legislation do?

The legislation simply requires an equal opportunity for high school athletes to participate in championship events, that is based solely on athleticism, sportsmanship and performance in qualifying contests.

Furthermore, it requires, where geography is used, a multiple entry format be used to compensate for the huge differences in sectional size. In this way, the legislation ensures that all schools have an equal chance to compete while preserving opportunities that currently exist for schools from smaller sections.

What does the NYSPHSAA mean when they suggest schools write their representative and say “Assembly Bill A2162 would limit our schools’ input by changing the current process that has been in place for over 80 years?”

It's difficult to determine what the NYSPHSAA is referring to in their sample letter for school districts. Since their current process unfairly limits opportunities for dozens of schools and hundreds of athletes, they can't possibly be arguing the current process is better than what the legislation mandates. New York State is a very different place and its schools and students have changed a lot since the 1920's. Nationally, virtually every other state has a process that, first and foremost, strives to be fair to their student-athletes.

Will the legislation cause financial hardship for school districts?

Hardly. The cost for a few more qualifiers from a few more schools in each section would be a pittance at best. Ironically, because of the inequity in the current system, financially-pressed schools from Northern New York's sections 7 and 10 have been sending many more athletes to state competitions than the average school in New York State for decades and have apparently been doing so without financial hardship.

Will it shorten regular sports season?

No. Most sports, like wrestling, will be able to accommodate the change with little or no change in current scheduling practices. A few sports may need some minor adjustments to their schedules but nothing like the changes in football's regular season and play-offs approved by the NYSPHSAA years ago.

It seems like the NYSPHSAA, in opposing the Fairness In Competition Bill, is putting the interests of their association ahead of what's fair to NYS student-athletes.

How could they do that?

Good question.

*For additional information, visit the New York State Wrestling Coaches Association web page at:
<http://www.sectioniiiwrestling.com/NYSWCA/>*