



THE DRAKE GROUP

Advancing Positive Legislative
Change In College Athletics



Report #4 – September 29, 2025 Fiddling While Rome is Burning: Focusing on the SCORE Act Instead of the Massive Media Revenue Gap



Supporter,

The NCAA and the Power Four conferences are pleading with the American public to contact their Congresspersons to ask them to vote for the **SCORE Act** in order to save college sports. After being cleared by two House committees and a planned vote during the week of September 15, the bill was delayed over concerns that the votes weren't there to pass it. Republican leaders are now seeking to make a deal with those representatives who pulled back, to keep the bill alive for a vote latter this session.

The bill, if adopted, would give the NCAA and the Power Four conferences their wish list. As currently written, it provides institutions, conferences, and the NCAA with an antitrust exemption, preemption of state laws, and classification of college athletes as non-employees, effectively codifying the recently approved *House v. NCAA (and Power Five Conferences)* settlement. The Drake Group believes that Congress should consider such lawmaking highly questionable given the facts that the approval of the settlement is now under appeal and the merits of the lawsuit have never been litigated.

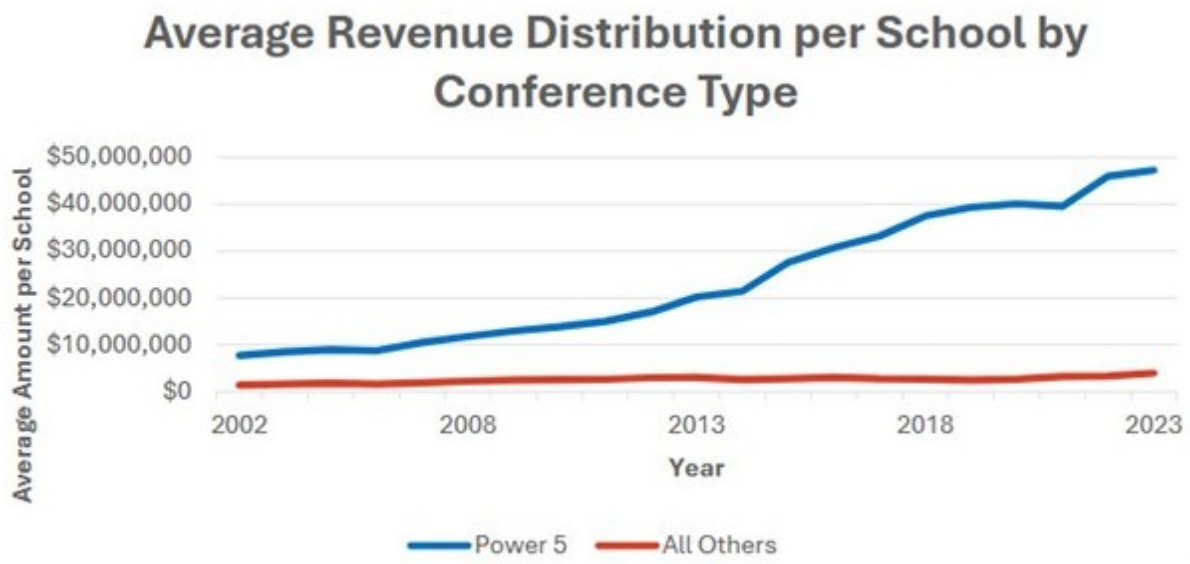
Besides providing substantial protection from antitrust and state law litigation risks, the bill would also grant the NCAA nearly total control of college athletics forever. In exchange, college athletes give up their employee rights, receive limited economic benefits, and have fewer protections regarding health, athletic injuries, transfer rights, and other benefits that they currently possess. The bill's provision providing 20 percent voting power for college athletes on NCAA committees is a false flag, as 40 percent is needed for any minority group to have enough power to push for systemic change.

The bill would also make permanent new pay-for-play practices never before permitted from higher education institution funds, along with cash signing and retention bonuses as incentives to attend or stay at an institution based on the

estimated value of the athlete to winning games and generating sports revenues. These forms of compensation are completely disconnected from educational expense or purpose, with no limits on cash payments to individual athletes. Most notably, the bill establishes a cash-based recruiting and pay-for-play athletics culture benefiting the two wealthiest Power Five conferences, highly paid Power Five coaches and administrators, and approximately 18,000 male football and basketball players among the 185,000 Division I athletes. These athletes are mostly male football and basketball players of color, many recruited through waivers of academic standards that would normally apply to their classmates. This has resulted in low graduation rates. The bill's focus on cash benefits for performance is likely to lead to treating these already exploited athletes as 'employees' who can be discarded based on playing ability rather than as students promised legitimate academic degrees.

The bill would also allow institutions to use a funding algorithm based on sport revenue generation that will reduce financial support of the current broad-based college sport system that provides extraordinary developmental athletics opportunities to over 500,000 athletes and serves as the bedrock of our Olympic sports development system. Further, the bill clearly intends to undermine federal and state laws that require equitable treatment of female athletes because it does not incorporate Title IX guardrails. Few institutions will have sufficient funds to both prioritize revenue sports and achieve gender equity. The Drake Group will continue to oppose the bill because of these fatal flaws.

While Congress responds to these cries of wolf and focuses on the SCORE Act, it is neglecting the core issue in college athletics: huge media revenue disparities that create a funding gap, which will disadvantage athletes at all but the top 30 to 40 wealthiest institutions that will continue to get richer, while the rest of Division I becomes poorer. As a result, a disproportionate number of these institutions will dominate March Madness and the College Football Playoff. A recent U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation report, ***The Growing College Sports Funding Gap: How Massive Media Revenue Disparities are Hurting Athletes and Smaller Schools***, illustrates how much the gap has widened, with the average Power 5 school receiving over 12 times more than other FBS conference programs (p. 4)



The report also suggests that “when television contracts are renegotiated, teams with the highest viewership in the ACC and Big 12 are most likely to get poached by the SEC and Big Ten, while schools with the lowest viewership across all conferences are in danger losing their conference spots or equal revenue distribution” (p.7) as depicted by viewership rankings below:

SEC		Big Ten		Big 12		ACC	
Georgia	21	Ohio State	21	Colorado	17	Florida State	10
Alabama	20	Michigan	17	Iowa State	5	Clemson	7
Texas	18	Penn State	15	Kansas State	4	Miami	6
Tennessee	13	Nebraska	10	Utah	4	Georgia Tech	5
Florida	10	Washington	9	Kansas	3	Duke	4
LSU	10	Oregon	8	Oklahoma State	3	Boston College	3
Texas A&M	9	USC	8	Texas Tech	3	Louisville	3
Oklahoma	8	Indiana	7	West Virginia	3	North Carolina	2
Ole Miss	8	Iowa	6	Arizona State	2	SMU	2
Missouri	6	Wisconsin	4	Baylor	2	Virginia Tech	2
South Carolina	6	Illinois	4	Arizona	1	NC State	1
Arkansas	5	Michigan State	3	BYU	1	Stanford	1
Auburn	5	Minnesota	3	TCU	1	Cal	0
Kentucky	5	Maryland	2	Houston	0	Wake Forest	0
Mississippi State	2	Rutgers	2	Cincinnati	0	Pitt	0
Vanderbilt	2	Purdue	1	Central Florida	0	Virginia	0
		UCLA	1			Syracuse	0
		Northwestern	0				
TOTAL	148	TOTAL	121	TOTAL	49	TOTAL	46

The Drake Group agrees with the report, and further, that Congress must condition the granting of antitrust exemptions to institutions, conferences, and their national governance associations on mechanisms that correct this massive media revenue imbalance. We also believe that when Congress acts, it must be in the form of a comprehensive collegiate athletics reform bill that effectively addresses:

- ensuring that graduation remains a central focus of intercollegiate athletics rather than a cash transaction culture;
- protection of athlete health, safety, and well-being as a top priority;
- guaranteeing athlete NIL and outside employment rights;
- effective Title IX enforcement;
- continued emphasis on broad sports programs that meet both student needs and serve the purpose of providing a strong Olympic team pathway
- expenditure guardrails that control lavish salaries and benefits;
- enforcement processes that include athlete options for arbitration and due process protections for all those accused of wrongdoing; and
- need for an independent board of directors or other national governance system operating in the best interest of all athletes and the educational enterprise.

We are currently working on a replacement bill for the SCORE Act that addresses all of the above—a heavy and ambitious lift that will require getting sponsors from both sides of the aisle and confronting the opposition of powerful conferences who would like to keep their current dominance intact.

We hope you will support this effort. We are a 100 percent volunteer 501(c)(4) non-profit organization operating thanks to membership dues and contributions from friends and supporters. If you are not already a member, we invite you to consider joining us!

Gratefully,

Kassandra

Kassandra Ramsey, Esq.
President

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Thank you for your support. Together, we can make a difference.

The Drake Group is a 501(c)(4) non-profit organization working to better educate the U.S. Congress and higher education policy-makers about critical issues in intercollegiate athletics for the purpose of ensuring that the promise of college athletics is realized for all stakeholders. Visit [The Drake Group web site](#) to volunteer or support our Congressional advocacy work.

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