



THE DRAKE GROUP

Advancing Positive Legislative
Change In College Athletics



Report #8 – October 29, 2025 The Drake Group Guideposts for Future Congressional Legislation



Supporter,

Thanks for joining us for this last report about our work over the past year.

What principles guide The Drake Group in its discussions with legislative staff?

First, we remind ourselves that successfully promoting laws requires bipartisanship and a long-term approach. Second is the realization that members from both sides must collaborate as co-sponsors. Third is accepting that with more complex or difficult issues, it is likely to take more time to develop legislative solutions. Lastly and perhaps the most important principle, is to develop legislation that will balance the interests of athletes and institutions, prevent the economic and academic exploitation of athletes, better protect athletes' health and well-being, and create a more sustainable financial model for athletic programs at tax-exempt education institutions. Below are the principles we seek to advance.

Protection of Athlete Health and Safety

1. Governance associations should establish and enforce coach, staff, and athlete codes of conduct that protect athletes from abuse and that are consistent with the **U.S. SafeSport Code**.
2. Institutions should provide medical insurance and cover second opinions, deductibles, or other out-of-pocket costs related to athletic injury treatment for all

athletes while participating in the athletics program. They should also cover ongoing treatment costs for five years after the athlete's eligibility ends.

3. Institutions should provide for the services of a licensed mental health professional in a manner that permits confidential access and covers all costs not covered by athletics department-provided insurance.

4. National governance associations should fund and administer a catastrophic injury insurance program and medical trust fund to provide long-term athletic injury expenses to all athletes. Funding for such health benefits programs should be derived from national association championship events, institution and governance entity sponsorships, licensing, and media rights revenues.

Protection of Athletes' Academic Rights

1. Governance association rules should prohibit coaches, staff members, or member institutions from restricting the rights of athletes to select academic courses and majors, even if course or program requirements conflict with some athletic practices or contests.

2. All athlete academic advising and academic support programs of member institutions should be under the control of the institution's provost or dean of students.

3. Athletes should have the right to transfer to other institutions without athletics eligibility penalties at least twice during their eligibility for athletics participation.

Protection of Freedom of Speech and Other Rights

1. Institutions should guarantee the rights of athletes to organize and protest consistent with the rights of all students.

2. Athletes should be permitted to file complaints with the Federal Trade Commission Consumer Protection Bureau related to unfair, deceptive, or fraudulent practices of institutional personnel.

3. No legislation should prohibit athletes from exercising their private right to sue.

Protection of Athletes' Employment Rights

1. College athletes should not be subject to employee status by virtue of their participation in extracurricular athletic programs offered by education entities receiving federal financial assistance.

2. If Congress categorizes college athletes as non-employees, such legislation should require health, medical, and other benefits of employees and provide for 50 percent athlete representation in governance associations in lieu of employee collective bargaining rights.

3. College athletes should not be prohibited or limited from self-employment or legitimate NIL or other third-party employment, conditioned only on pay commensurate with local market rates (as opposed to perceived value to team success) and not conditioned on inducements to attend or remain at the institution, compensation based on athletic performance, or participation in revenue-producing sports.

Institutionally-Provided Financial Assistance and Benefits

1. Athletics-related financial assistance should be tethered to educational purpose (e.g., tuition, required fees, room, board, books, additional costs of education identified under federal student financial assistance regulations, academic awards, awards for graduation, expenses related to study abroad, paid internships related to

academic major, graduate or other continuing education, etc.) and, other than room and board expenses, such benefits should not be subject to taxation.

2. Athletics-related financial assistance, once awarded, should be continued for five years or until graduation, whichever occurs first, with no withdrawal for reasons of injury or inadequate performance and conditioned only on the student continuing athletics participation and meeting academic eligibility and student conduct standards.

3. Aggregated financial assistance and benefits annually awarded to all male and female athletes participating in the athletics program should be equal to or greater than the institution's aggregated annual coaches and staff compensation and benefits (excluding mental health, medical, and athletics injury insurance staff compensation and benefits) or similar provisions that appropriately balance athlete and employee interests.

Institution, Conference, and National Athletics Governance Entities

1. Exemption of such entities from the Sherman Antitrust Act or pre-emption of state laws should be conditioned on meeting all the provisions listed above and below.

2. Title IX compliance should be required as a condition of governance association membership or access to post-season competition with appropriate rules for regular peer and third-party review and reasonable time limits to remedy identified deficiencies.

3. Governance entities may establish limits on the maximum number of athletes by sport who may receive athletics financial assistance but may not restrict the participation of walk-ons (athletes who do not receive athletics-related financial assistance).

4. Institutions or governance entities should not be allowed to set any limit on the compensation and benefits given to individual employees, except for restrictions related to excessive severance packages that are inappropriate for non-profit organizations. These institutions or entities should be required to establish a maximum total coach/staff compensation and benefits maximum limit. Aggregated financial assistance and benefits awarded to all male and female athletes participating in the athletics program should be equal to or greater than the combined annual compensation and benefits of the institution's coaches and staff, excluding licensed mental health, medical, and athletics trainers professionals (or a similar formula that fairly balances athlete and employee interests).

5. Governance entities should be required to establish limits on the maximum number of coaches and support staff members by sport.

6. Governance entities should establish limits on the number of coaches or staff members who are permitted to engage in off-campus recruiting.

7. Governance entities should be required to have an independent board of directors with all members having equal voting power. Independence should be specified as being at least five years removed from employment, athletics participation, or other service or donor affiliation with the institution or governance entity. Athlete representatives elected by current athletes should be provided with fifty percent voting power to adopt institution, conference, league, or national association rules.

8. Governance entities shall limit years of athletics eligibility, athletics-related financial aid by sport, establish contest and travel limitations, practice and competition periods and hours spent on athletics-related activities.

9. Governance entities should establish an athlete welfare advocate office to provide independent legal advice to athletes and their parents or legal guardians

regarding the application of governance association rules and the athlete's due process rights when athletics eligibility or access to athletics-related financial aid is threatened.

10. Institutions that provide their athletics programs with subsidies from non-athlete student activity fees should seek approval through a student referendum at least once every four years. Additionally, any year in which an increase is proposed should also require referendum approval. They should also issue fully transparent student fee bills that clearly indicate the activity fee amount allocated to athletics.

We need your help—please consider becoming a member. We hope you will support our efforts to ensure that any bill reaching the floor of Congress includes the strong protections detailed above. We are a 100 percent volunteer 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization funded by membership dues and contributions from friends and supporters. If you are not already a member or contributor, 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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