

The Fairness In Competition Act A.2162-A/S.2064-A Morelle/Libous Questions & Answers

What would the bill do?

The bill would require the New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA) to have a proportionally based multiple-entry format for state competition in certain individual sports.

Why is this legislation necessary?

Unlike other states, New York does not organize its state championship competitions into more or less equal geographical groupings of schools. New York State is currently organized into 11 areas, called sections, and each section is restricted to the same number of entries regardless of how many schools compete in that sport in that section. Take for example the sport of Golf, one section has 11 schools competing in the sport while another section has 77 schools. Both sections send nine golfers to the state tournament even though one section has seven times more competitors. In the sport of wrestling, one section has two schools competing while another has fifty. Both send one entry to the state tournament. This system is fundamentally unfair on its face.

Athletes are denied a similar opportunity to qualify for state competition depending on what section their school is in. These youngsters are discriminated against based on geography. As a result state championship events are tainted with controversy and their value is diminished.

This unfair system limits opportunities for our high school athletes, has a real effect on college entrance and scholarships, and it contradicts the very educational values we demand be taught in our schools.

Are there any other states that have a system of unequal sections?

One, California, and they have been using a proportionally based multiple-entry system since the 1970's.

Shouldn't NYSPHSAA be the entity to fix this?

They should be but they haven't and have rejected efforts to reform this discriminatory system. The issue is not new to NYSPHSAA, it has been brought to their attention for decades. During the past four years, the New York State Wrestling Coaches Association (NYSWCA) has offered multiple-entry proposals for NYSPHSAA's consideration that have been ignored or rejected without explanation. For more than three years, Assemblyman Joe Morelle, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Sports, has met and corresponded with NYSPHSAA staff urging these reforms to no avail.

Should the state legislature be telling NYSPHSAA how to run their state championships?

It should be pointed out that the legislation doesn't tell NYSPHSAA how to run their state championships, it merely sets a "fairness standard". There are a number of ways to meet that standard. They could realign the state's sections into equal groupings like other states. They could combine sections as they already do for the football championships. They could allocate

the number of entries per section based on the number of schools competing. The standard is proportionality – how NYSPHSAA gets there is up to them.

Which sports will be covered by the legislation?

The legislation is intended to address those sports most harmed by the NYSPHSAA policies. It doesn't apply to those sports where state championships are organized by the five standard school population classifications and it doesn't apply to sports where there is an objective qualifying standard for entry into the state championships like time or distance. Sports affected would be wrestling, golf, tennis, bowling and gymnastics.

Will this change cause financial hardship for NYSPHSAA and its member schools?

No, some school districts would have to bear the cost of sending additional athletes to state competition in a few sports. These costs do not seem burdensome as some schools – without complaint – have been sending a disproportionate number of athletes to state competition for decades because of little or no competition at their sectional qualifying events.

NYSPHSAA may experience some additional costs for officials and awards. In the case of the state high school wrestling tournament, based on the experience in the rest of the country, NYSPHSAA costs would be more than offset by additional revenues from an expanded multiple-entry tournament.