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Printed on page A1

High School Athletics Bill That Proposed Major Changes to FHSAA Expected to Die

Sponsor Sen. Kelli Stargel said the measure is stuck in Senate committee.

By [Bill Ruffin](#)

LEDGER POLITICAL EDITOR

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TALLAHASSEE | A bill proposing major changes for the Florida High School Athletic Association likely is dead this year.

The bill's sponsor, Sen. Kelli Stargel, R-Lakeland, said Thursday evening, "the bill is likely not going to happen. We are running out of time."

With Senate Bill 1164, Stargel had hoped to, among other things, change the focus of the governing board, which she said is too inbred, by increasing the number of members and how they are appointed.

Stargel's bill is stuck in Senate Rules Committee, and a Senate source said there appears to be resistance to releasing it. The source also noted that early support from Senate leadership for the bill seemed to have evaporated in recent days.

House Bill 1279, sponsored by Rep. Larry Metz, R-Yalaha in Lake County, and similar to Stargel's bill, passed the House and has been sent over to the Senate, but for three days Senate President Don Gaetz failed to take it up.

Stargel's bill would have expanded the governing board from 16 to 25 by adding four members appointed by the House and four members appointed by the Senate and an additional member appointed by the commissioner of education.

But she had planned an amendment to her bill, if it ever got to the floor of the Senate, cutting the board to eight members made up of representatives who weren't part of the FHSAA membership.

Early in the legislative session Roger Dearing, executive director of the Florida High School Athletic Association, said, "We are going to let our voice be heard," in fighting the bill.

Stargel took on the FHSAA last year after learning of some cases in which players were ruled ineligible to play.

After last year's bill passed easing transfer restrictions on playing sports, Stargel said she was still concerned about the culture of the organization and the attitude that a student who transferred and wanted to play sports at another school was basically guilty until proven innocent.

Proposals in the bill this year would:

Eliminate the need for a student athlete to sit out of play for a year if a transfer was approved by the school district.

Allow a student enrolled at a school of choice that does not offer a particular sport to

play that sport at his or her local school, even if that school is a charter school.

Make the FHSAA liable for all fees and costs of a hearing if the FHSAA tries to prove a student ineligible and fails.

Require a parent or guardian be present when an FHSAA inspector comes into a home.

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