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## After three years and a lawsuit, records from TSSAA finally made public

Posted on [December 1, 2014](#) by [Deborah Fisher](#)

The *Nashville Scene* finally received records sought three years ago from the Tennessee Secondary School Athletics Association as part of an investigation into rule-breaking by an elite private school in Nashville.

When the TSSAA refused to turn over details about rule violations regarding tuition assistance for athletes at Montgomery Bell Academy, the now-defunct *City Paper* in Nashville sued and won. *City Paper* was owned by Southcomm Inc.; Southcomm also owns the *Nashville Scene*.

Steve Cavendish, now news editor for the *Nashville Scene* and former editor at the *City Paper*, wrote that the TSSAA finally turned over the records in November after the Tennessee Supreme Court declined to take the TSSAA's appeal of a lower court ruling.

In [the story](#), Cavendish explains the effort to obtain the records from TSSAA, as well as what the records eventually revealed:

What those records show is a culture at the elite private school where TSSAA rules on assistance to athletes were largely ignored for decades; where prominent board members and coaching staff covered some or all of the tuition of some athletes; and where the administration had an apparent lack of institutional control.

At issue isn't the kind of corruption that's often alleged in big-money college athletics. Indeed, when patrons (including church congregations) overstepped the TSSAA's stated bounds, it appears in most cases to have been for the best of intentions: to help students whose families had fallen on hard times or met with emergency needs. The issue lies more with the lack of transparency at the TSSAA itself — a body that governs al-



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most all high school athletics in the state with little accountability or oversight. Its workings remain largely out of view.

And as these documents show, its rules apparently go unenforced — until someone throws a flag.

Read the full Nashville Scene story here: [What a three-year public records fight revealed about the TSSAA's financial aid rules and the school that broke them.](#)

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About Deborah Fisher

Deborah Fisher has been executive director of Tennessee Coalition for Open Government since 2013. Previously she spent 25 years in the news industry as a journalist.

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