

NCAA eyes athlete protection as betting expands

David Purdum, ESPN Staff Writer Oct 4, 2023, 03:31 PM ET

NCAA president Charlie Baker wants state lawmakers to take steps to better protect student-athletes from harassment and coercion from gamblers and to combat threats to the integrity of the games as widespread, legal college sports betting takes hold in the United States.

The NCAA announced Wednesday that it will begin advocating for state laws to include increased penalties for bettors who harass student-athletes, mandatory reporting hotlines for gambling-related threats, a uniform minimum betting age of 21 and funding for the education of college students about the risks of betting.

The NCAA also is asking for input on what types of wagers are allowed at sportsbooks, citing prop bets on individual player performances as "especially vulnerable to integrity issues."

"The NCAA is making changes to help student-athletes make smart choices when it comes to sports betting, but given the explosive growth of this new industry, we are eager to partner with lawmakers, regulators and industry leaders to protect student-athletes from harassment and threats," Baker said in a release announcing the advocacy campaign.

The FBI has characterized threats by bettors to student-athletes as a growing issue, and betting scandals have popped up at multiple NCAA

schools this year.

In May, [Alabama fired its head baseball coach](#) after he was linked to suspicious betting activity on a Crimson Tide game against LSU. Days later, authorities accused [dozens of student-athletes at Iowa and Iowa State of betting violations](#).

Thirty-five states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have launched betting markets since 2018, when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a federal statute that had restricted sports gambling to primarily Nevada. Florida, Maine and Vermont have passed sports betting bills.

The NCAA disclosed in July that there had been 175 sports betting violations by athletic department administrators, coaches and student-athletes since the 2018 ruling from the Supreme Court. The violations ranged from small wagers of \$5-\$10 to players betting on their own schools or providing inside information, Baker wrote in a response letter to U.S. Congresswoman Dina Titus on July 12.

"Some states have great policies on the books to protect student-athletes from harassment and coercion and to protect the integrity of the games, but as more states pass or amend laws, more needs to be done," Baker said in Wednesday's release.