



HIGHSCHOOL OT

NCHSAA press conference discusses new state law overhauling role of association

Details

Transcript

Uh Good morning again. Yesterday afternoon, the NCHSAA learned that Governor Roy Cooper had elected not to sign Senate Bill 452 thereby allowing it to become law. The governor noted in his comments about the bill that the late night changes to high school sports governance are a solution in search of a problem. While we agree with his sentiment, we do wish that he had utilized his veto power, forcing the senators to again garner the votes to override that veto. But Senate Bill 452 is now law. I'm sure there are certain legislators who feel this is a win win, but this staff, the members of the board of directors and all those who make up the association will do all we can to ensure that this is not a loss for the student athletes of North Carolina. This legislation handcuffs the NCHSAA, it handcuffs the means through which the association can raise funds. It prevents the NCHSAA from giving grants and scholarships back to students and schools unless they are donor directed. It renders the

current memorandum of understanding that is with the State Board of Education nonexistent. Rather the current memorandum of understanding is now under the purview of the state superintendent of public instruction. If the NCHSA A is to remain as the administering organization moving forward, answering to the state superintendent of public instruction, then a new memorandum of understanding will need to be negotiated prior to 2024 2025 school year. The NCHSA A has a difficult task ahead, but for now, we are committed to continuing to operate under the standards of excellence as we have since its inception of 1913. I want to say a special thank you to all of those who have shown support over this staff. Our board of directors since this bill was added at the 11th hour on September 28th. Those include but are not limited to our member schools and the conferences, the North Carolina Coaches Association, the North Carolina Athletic Directors Association and the National Federation of State High School Associations Family. Thank you. At this time, we will accept questions. Please raise your hand and be called on. Are there any questions at this time? All right, I see, uh, Steve from the Charlotte Observer. Ok. Commissioner. Uh, my question is this issue has been going on now for well, for a while and especially became especially acute during the past week and a lot has been written about it. But the problem I'm finding when I go out to a sport event and I talked to some people, uh, during the past week is that I, I think the average run of the mill parent or sports fan is still having difficulty seeing how this affects, um, the, the events that take place in the gym on the field. In other words, what sort of substantive change might? Will they see? They, they go and buy a ticket or online and get inside the stadium and sit and watch a football game and they, they have, they stay there with their friends and they, they go home, they leave, how are things going to change? Because I think that that has not quite filtered down to the average fan. Well, um that's a great question. Uh Yes, most people go to games and they don't think about what happens on the, on the backside. So how do the games ever get to, uh, to be played? Well, you have to have rules and regulations. Somebody has to oversee those rules and regulations and for all these many years, that's been the NCHSA A. We have worked with the membership to make sure that everyone knows what those rules and regulations are. If we go away or if we're not that organization, then there still has to be someone who is determining eligibility. There has to be someone who is putting in place the administrative rules. How do you begin football season? What are the rules for conditioning? Uh What date can we start playing? What date can we start scrimmaging how many scrimmages can we have? How many games can we have? And if there's no one governing that, or at least leading that charge to make sure that those are in place, then you don't ever get to a game on Friday night. I guess it could be. Maybe like when I used to play in my backyard, uh, you didn't have any rules and regulations, we just made them up as we went along. Um, and that's my fear is that there could be, uh, someone who is making those rules up as they go along without giving a lot of foresight to it. And then obviously, once the regular season is over, we always have a playoff program. Well, most of

you on this, uh, in this meeting with us today, you know, that the playoffs typically have belonged to the NCHSA A and so we put that structure in place and if there isn't someone putting those in place, then will there be playoffs? Do we culminate in a state championship? So I think those are the questions that, that, that can be stated to, uh, someone in the general public. But even going a step beyond that, one of the things that we've prided ourselves on over at least the last 30 years or so is that we also try to be, um, service oriented in that we want to do more than just put the rules in place and, and worry about, uh, helping coaches with the Xs and Os. We've been about trying to empower leadership. Uh not only with our student athletes but with coaches and athletic directors. And so if it's, if it isn't this organization that is doing, that, will all of those things go away? Will there be another student leadership conference statewide student leadership conference? Will we continue to have a student athlete advisory council? What will happen to uh the AD conference if the NCHSA A staff is not there? For example. Uh I think those are the kinds of things that, that could go away and people don't really, don't really realize it. Next, we'll recognize Laura, could you identify yourself as well? Sure, sorry. Um This is Laura Leslie calling from um from Wral, I usually cover the legislature. Uh not, not sports but um yeah, in that vein, commissioner, I'm hoping you can explain. So it seemed like at, at the last time they passed one of these bills, it seemed like uh like like NCHSA A and, and the lawmakers had kind of come to some kind of detente and, you know, we're kind of working through things in a way, it sort of make everybody, you know, happy or at least, ok with it. So what happened to precipitate this latest change? Uh Laura, as I understand it, there were several legislators who really weren't satisfied with the House bill 91 and they weren't satisfied with the memorandum that was negotiated they felt like there should have been more. Uh And I guess perhaps they never used this word. So this is my word. Perhaps their feeling was there should have been more restrictions on us. But in good faith, our board of directors along with our staff negotiated with the State Board of Education that memorandum of understanding. So when they introduced Senate bill 6 36 and let's not forget that bill was introduced in April. And so when that bill was introduced, and we went to a education meeting, one of the committee meetings over at the legislative office building and were sitting in that room, that question was asked. And they, again, several senators said they didn't feel that the State Board of Education had done what they should have done and that they did not carry out their wishes through. Uh when House Bill 91 was passed and that essentially the memorandum of understanding did not do what it needed to, to do. So, Laura, they were trying to, I, I believe I heard one of them say close those loopholes. What loopholes were they closing? I guess? Well, uh I'll give you an example. One of the things that was said is that the appeal process, I think somebody said it was really a farce and they really tried to insinuate that the State Board of Education really wasn't controlling the appeal process. And actually, as it was being shared, it said that it would go to this independent panel, but then it would come back to us, which is not the truth

at all. But they didn't like the appeal process. There was the belief that instead of the member school being the one who would appeal any ruling that came out of this office. And, and, and let's remember when there is a violation of a rule, then the member school would reach out to the state to, to our office and say we want to appeal the ruling and they would appeal it to me as the commissioner, our staff, we would look at it and then we would either grant the appeal or we would deny it if it was denied. Based on the memorandum of understanding, it was then appealed directly to this independent panel and they would hear the position of the member school. Well, there were times according to certain senators that students ought to be able to directly appeal themselves or parents should be able to directly appeal themselves. And you know, our contention has always been that as a membership driven organization, the school is the advocate for its Children, its students, its student athletes. And so that if there is to be an appeal of a ruling that that ought to come from the schools, they didn't like that. And so I think in this bill, they have now created an avenue whereby any parents and or a student who doesn't like a ruling that somebody gives could now appeal that. And I believe unless I'm mistaken, and I'm still trying to understand everything that's in this bill is that now that appeal could go directly to the state superintendent of public instruction. So that's just an example of what they felt like. We didn't do a good job of negotiating in the memorandum is that we didn't provide the opportunity for parents and students to be able to um to appeal any ruling that we made that they would do. They, they wanted them to be able to directly come and make that appeal. Uh Eric Guen Witn, hi, this is Eric Beli in Witn. Um The question I have is just so that I I can explain it correctly. You guys are still going to be the operating of the high school sports or does that entirely go over to the State Board of Education? Because it sounds like everything is moving to them? Yeah, that's a good question, Eric does it at this moment and we believe that through the current school year, we will remain as the administering organization. All right. And the only way we are the administering organization today is we had to sign that memorandum of understanding back last March 22 which we did with the State Board of Education. Well, now that memorandum is still in place but everywhere that in the memorandum, the word State Board of Education appears it's to be replaced with the superintendent of public instruction. So we are, we still are under that current memorandum we believe. But then with all of the other things that are now included in the bill, it will mean we must renegotiate that memorandum. And so there is that possibility that if we don't sign that memorandum of understanding, for example, then we wouldn't be that administering organization for 24 25 Alex Bass. You would also uh introduce yourself. Thank you, Brandon. Uh This is Alex Bass with the news and observer and uh Commissioner Tucker. Good morning. If I might ask, I think many of us on this call and many people throughout North Carolina find it very difficult to believe ultimately that a football team being uh being unable to participate in the state playoffs per written policy in terms of ejections for fighting Anson County or a girls soccer student athlete being ineligible

for non-compliance with state Board of Education policy concerning, concerning a minimum course load, which was policy too just to use two examples that those things really were not the impetus for legislative oversight of education based athletics in an almost all type fashion. I don't think any of us believe that what do you believe are really were the prevailing motives driving these actions? Well, I I think those things that you just mentioned, obviously, they were the, they instigated the even the House Bill of 91 being introduced. I don't think there's any question that, that um that, that drove the conversation. Um I do believe that there is, um you know, some, there could be some personal issues going on. Um I've tried to take the high road on those Alex. Um I think that, you know, there are personal, I think many politicians have personal agendas. We don't always know what they are and this may be one of those times when we're left to speculate. Uh but I do believe that those, those instances. Uh the first one you mentioned relative to a fight and then the one that drove uh that we were dealing with last spring as it related to scholastic um eligibility. I think they did drive that. But I think they just, it, it was just uh the, the actions this past spring was just fuel added to a fire that smoldered once we signed the memorandum in March of 2022. So it was like a smoldering fire and that somebody was looking for something that would just give them another reason to come forward with Senate Bill 6 36. And it is very unfortunate, it's disappointing that personal agendas get in the way of doing what is right for everybody. And, and I'm sure that there are some lawmakers who will tell you that this is right for all student athletes, but the proof's in the pudding and it will come later. Uh We uh no one will really uh see it probably this year. Uh but as we move forward, especially if the membership decides that it does not want to remain um the administering organization under the terms of a memorandum of understanding based on this current law, then the proof will truly be in the pudding because then it will mean either the Department of Public Instruction is governing high school athletics and running championships or another organization will emerge. And um you know, so that, that's where we are. So, uh, do I think there are some personal agendas? Yes. Um, but you know, this is not the forum to, to talk about those, uh, before we move on to another hand raise, we got a question from, uh, Richard Craver from the Winston Salem Journal. He asks what concerns the NCHS A has about game day, game day security with the new law. Uh, did something happen here? Did they get? All right, there we go. Um, well, I'm not real sure. Um, keep in mind now that this, um, this bill doesn't totally go into effect until July 2024. So, will it have any immediate effects on security? I'm not real sure. Um, especially for this year. Um I think what we have in place this year will remain in place and therefore we'll continue to do what we need to do to help. Um, our schools keep everyone who attends contests, events, keep them safe. Uh, so I, I don't know that I have the answer about security moving forward. Uh Does Sean, if you would also identify yourself before you ask your question? Good morning Commissioner. This is Sean Brown with WSOC. Um And thank you for taking the time for those who have been following uh the nil policies that were passed and

I believe subsequently blocked. What impact does this have on nil across uh North Carolina High School, public high schools? And if you could just provide an update on where that stands? Ok, thanks to Sean. Well, first of all, there is no policy. You're right. Our board of directors did put some guidelines in place that we um you know, had hoped would become truly policy. We understood at the time. Last May that this would, this required the State Board of Education, um you know, rule. And so we were waiting and hoping that that could come uh July 1 and when it didn't, that meant we just simply had to put it on the shelf. Uh We were instructed, uh and, you know, very adamantly that we didn't have the authority to put any kind of a policy in place such as NIL. But I think there's just such misunderstanding about nil. Anyway, uh that people thought that what we were trying to do and what our board was trying to do was to set up a system whereby student athletes could be paid to play, that's far from it. What we were trying to do is help students have some guidelines so that when they were approached by a business or another entity and asked to sign a contract that perhaps involved money and finances that we could keep those student athletes eligible to play in our programs. Um And so that's what we were trying to do. So this new bill has a provision in it that says that the state superintendent and the state Board of Education must create an nil policy. So I guess it remains to be seen what that policy will look like. Uh, once they put it in place, um they say that it must have an amateur rule that has an nil provision. Uh I believe that's the way the language spells it out. So I guess sometime over the next, uh you know, so many months, the state board and the state Superintendent of Public Construction will be putting together an an amateur rule that includes nil provision. That's what the law says. We'll go to Nick Stevens and then back to Alex. Uh Thank you. Um I, I have two sort of related questions. I think. Um the first one, are there any discussions happening right now about um the impacts that this could have or future impacts this could have on organizations that are not necessarily, not necessarily under the NCHS A but affiliated with the NCHS A, like the athletic directors association, the Coaches Association. Um You know, some of the officials organizations that are out there, they're obviously their own entities but are associated with the association. Well, thanks Nick for that question. I have thought about that part. Not necessarily about our ad association or coaches association, but I have thought about nonprofit organizations. We are a 501 c three not-for-profit organization. We've never made any bones about that once we attain that status. Um And so obviously we were doing it so that we could be in a position as an association to be able to, to raise monies, to be able to provide additional resources to our membership. That was one reason for um you know, becoming a 501 C three, but I thought about just any 501 C three organization. If they make a senator man or they make a representative man, what would they do to them? Uh So we have a general assembly now that essentially has said if you are a private entity and you want to govern high school athletics in this state, then you must follow these orders. And so that as an organization, that's one of the things when I said that there are hard times ahead for the

association. That's part of it. We are a legitimate 501 C three organization. We have articles of incorporation and we have bylaws. So what do we do with those bylaws? So any nonprofit entity uh who is out there, if they have articles of incorporation and they have bylaws, but they make somebody mad, will, they do the same thing to them that they are doing to us? Because as much as they want to say, well, it's about the administering organization. This was being done to us to say, you need to be a governmental agent. You need to be a public, uh, group because that's the only group that ought to be governing public athletics. Uh, you know, that's what's been said. So, Nick, we haven't had any conversation with our athletic directors association or with the coaches association that are incorporated themselves, um, that have bylaws whereby they operated and what impact they, they may have. I truly hope that this wouldn't be one of those domino effects. Is that ok? We got the NCHSA A, let's see if we can get these other organization, if that happens. Uh, then it's really a sad day, uh, that we would go to that extreme, but I'm sure that those organizations are, are watching because, and, and I'll say this when the House Bill 91 was being negotiated, one of those organization was reached out to, uh, by a senator and wanted to ask some questions about what they did and their ability to, to raise money. So I, I, there could be a, uh, you know, a trickle down effect. I hope not, but it could happen. Uh, and if I could just 11 last question, um, have, have there been any further discussions amongst the NCHS A board of directors about what it wants to do next? Obviously, ultimately, I guess it's the board's decision as to the direction that, that the NCHS A goes. Do, do they have any opinions about that path forward? No, we do not. Um, and in fact, before I got on the call, I had a text from my president saying, you know, are we at a point now that the bill has been passed? Do we need to try to, to, you know, get together with our attorneys now again and just kind of see what does this all mean. Uh We obviously, you know, have legal representation, Ellis and winters. And so, uh that's the next step I think, uh to for the board to grapple with individually as they represent the eight regions across our state, we have to grapple with what does it mean. But always remember there are 436 members who also need to have a say. And I think that our board, if I know them correctly as individuals, they wouldn't want to make this decision in isolation of their membership and use as, as their crutch. Well, I represent my region. And so yes, let's go ahead and vote. I would think as we went across the state the past two weeks and especially last week, we talked about the fact that you are the NCHSA A, we will have to make some decisions. So I anticipate that that will be something forthcoming. Alex. Go ahead. Thank you, Brandon. Uh, Commissioner Tucker, uh two part, somewhat related but somewhat different question without speaking to the specifics of the new Bern football situation because I know you don't want to do that and it said the association will not have a comment on that, but just that concept right there. Does that offer a litmus test for a perspective on understanding some of the things you talked about earlier that when a situation of the sort arises, what does that mean from eligibility? What, what, what does that mean? From championship and

historical documentation? What does that mean for uh compliance with uh DP I and uh SBS be policies concerning credits, all, all that good stuff. Uh Does that offer us a litmus test for as these things change now, in terms of who administers that perspective that we, we, we really could be seeing the beginning of a Wild West type thing? Should something like that arise? And then the, the, the second question is just to what degree do you find it hypocritical or whatever you wanna call it? That in 2009, it effectively was the state legislature that didn't do what it could to stop the eventual schism by which the North Carolina High School Athletic Association was not, no longer was a state entity. And now they're talking, well, a state entity should be running high school athletics. Well, they had an opportunity to make sure that this never was the case in 2009. And the NC. And, and neither the NCHSAAS greatest unofficial legislative advocate and Doctor Bill Friday and Charlie Adams himself couldn't even stop that. But now the legislature is saying a public organization should do this but they didn't do what it could. How hypocritical. Do you find that? Well, uh, Alex, I hadn't thought about it from that standpoint and I think basically, you've laid it out there and I guess we can all uh look at that and say, well, you know, that's maybe to the, to the nth degree I, you know, um, but let's go back and, and look at the other question you asked as it relates to, um, you know, the, the, the new situation, which we're not gonna talk about here, but just in terms of our ability to be able to, to levy penalties and, um, you know, uh ask our membership to continue to be in compliance. I guess it's a litmus test in this way, that ruling was issued yesterday. Will we have someone who steps forward as a, as a legislator and tries to get involved in that situation? Um, and, and say that, well, we, we were, we went too far, uh and, and really try to walk us back. That could be the litmus test now to date, I've not received any, any indication that there is any legislator who is, who is going to reach out or, or want to do something along those lines. But I do believe that, uh I, I like to, to hold out hope. I like to believe that our members do everything with a sense of, of um a great deal of integrity and that our membership will demand whoever is uh administering high school athletics that if we're going to be education based athletics, then we can't truly become the wild, wild west that we have to have some rules and regulations. And that if the State Board of Education, in conjunction with the state Superintendent of Public Instruction makes it too loose. And says within that memorandum of understanding that uh there are, there aren't some ways that we can hold ourselves accountable or that the association, whoever is administering it, that the members can't be held accountable, then we'll have everybody doing something different from Okra Cote to Hawai Dam. That's how far apart we are in terms of where our schools are located. And so we just need to make sure that we talk about consistency. We talk about a level playing field, fair play. And that's one of the things that we've prided ourselves on, even if people didn't like rules and regulations. And I've had ad say this to me. Q I haven't always agreed with you all. But what I have always agreed with is the fact that I knew that if it was happening to me that way, that it was going to happen to someone else the same way. And

that's a fear I have is that we could get to a point where it's, well, let's rule this way in case. A, well, here's case b well, I feel bad for this family. So let's rule this way. That's, that's just a terrible way to govern high school athletics. And I don't know anyone who sits in the seat, I sit in across this country who would wish that on anyone. And so, um, I, I hope that the, wow, wow, West mentality does not, uh, you know, uh, show itself, although I am concerned with the number of fights that I've seen recently and, and just, uh the number of ejections, uh what that's concerning and, um, how do we rein that in? Well, one of the ways that we've always reined it in and, and as executive directors and commissioners across the country, we've all talked about. One of the ways we rein it in is, is, is through a fine and nobody likes to find anybody. But that's one of the ways that some of some state associations have found it to work. It worked for us. And, um, you know, let's hope that the things that are in place, at least through this year is that those things will continue to work and that we can get those numbers at least to level off as it relates to ejections. And that again, this, wow. Wow. West mentality does not rear its ugly head. We're gonna take a handful more questions, Eric Earl and Nick. I'll get to you in just a moment. There are some questions typed into the chat. Uh, commissioner. Can you explain how not being allowed to engage in sponsorships from third parties other than for state championship games affects the operations for the NCHSA A. Um That's a great question. One of one of the things that we talked to the membership about over the last couple of weeks is that every year the NCHSA A staff puts together a budget. So we operate on a on a yearly budget and our goal is always to bring in the revenue so that we can operate not only pay salaries and benefits that we can keep the lights on that we can, you know, have vehicles that we can drive to various contests and meetings, but that we're also to have memorable championship experiences. And so our supporters, those people who share our mission who share the belief that education based athletics is, is really critical to what we try to do as we're preparing young people to go out into the world and be good citizens. So these supporters down through the years have agreed with us and have supported that not only sometimes with their physical presence, but they've supported us financially. And so we have used those financial dollars to go into our operating budget for the year. And so if we can't use those dollars during the regular season, then where that's because that's a, a, you know, one of the percentages, uh, you know, it's a large percentage of our operating budget, our bi yearly operating budget. So if we can't do that, then we have to figure out are we gonna have to cut staff and, you know, we have one of one of the smallest staffs than anybody else in the country. Uh, there are, you know, there are only about 16 of us here and, and right now we're struggling to even get folk who want to come and work with us because of this legislation. And so if you take away the ability of us to have those type relationships, then financially, I think the association will struggle. The NCHS A will struggle to try to figure out how we make ends meet financially. Um, we get a percentage from the playoffs and as everybody should know, it's always been a graduated, um, level is that our schools were getting the largest

percentage in those early rounds. And as we got closer to the regionals and obviously the state championships, that's when the association would get a, a higher percentage. And someone would say, well, why do you get more then? Because that's when our expenses go up, you have to pay to be able to play, uh at NC State at Wake Forest at Duke to, to wrestle in the Greensboro Coliseum. Those don't just come to us free of charge. Uh, you have to pay their staff, you have to pay our people to go, come in and help our staff be able to support, we have trainers. Uh, so there are those expenses and so that's why it's always been graduated. Now, what is being said now, is that ok? You have a flat amount and that this is the rate that will be in place from the beginning, from the first round to the last round. All right. Now, somebody will say, well, that's a good thing. Well, the schools will tell you that's probably not a good thing because they're the, they're the losers in that proposition. Um So not having the dollars and cents and not having the corporate supporters will impact our uh operating budget on a yearly basis. Um, as I told our membership last, uh, last week, is that many people will say, well, if you, if you think you're going to finish in the red, well, can't you just go get some endowment dollars? No, it doesn't work that way. People don't understand the endowment. People don't understand that you do anything that has been designated as endowed means we can't use it to operate. And so we never have and we never will be able to. Now, under the wise direction of some boards of directors years ago, they turned some dollars into Quasi Endowment, which means that our board of directors can make some decisions about how to spend some of those dollars, but not to operate. That's when we're able to give money to schools when they're hit by a hurricane or we're able to help out when the pandemic hits or we're able to give grants is because the board could authorize that. And remember in this new legislation, it limits our ability to even be able to give grants to schools. So we've got to try to figure out what all that means and how that will work because if schools have some needs, they no longer will be able to just write a grant and say we need some assistance if we're reading the language of that bill correctly and we'll continue to do that. So major hit to us financially, especially a as we operate if we're limited in having that type of support. Uh, just a couple more, uh, question from Patrick mccormick from the Watauga Democrat. Commissioner Tucker, is there any hope to reconcile differences with the North Carolina legislature? Has that time passed and now perhaps wait for different representatives to come into office? Well, um I'd like to think that there would be a way to reconcile these differences. But since house bill 91 was introduced in 2021 we weren't really able to even, uh uh it, it was difficult just to even negotiate that. Fortunately, we had several senators um who were staunch supporters and really helped us. Now, unfortunately, or fortunately, depending on your perspective here, they are now in Washington DC trying to look out for citizens across the country while also looking out for us. But a couple of those folks who were just great uh supporters uh you know, are, are now um in the House of Representatives in, in DC. Um So if they were still in place, I might, would say, yeah, I'm gonna talk to those two and we just got

to figure out a way that we can sit down and we can work through this. We didn't have that kind of voice as this whole thing unfolded. But I, but I will say this, we cannot lose sight of the fact that Senate Bill 636 when it was introduced and as it moved along, ever so slowly, it stalled and there was not the support for it by itself. So let's find a way. Somebody said we gotta get this passed. And so someone came up with the bright idea of taking the guts of 636 and at the 11th hour adding it to a bill that has absolutely nothing to do with the NCHSA A and athletics. And so for the first 26 pages, it dealt with something entirely different and then it was at the middle of page 27 that all of a sudden we show up and it is the guts of 636. So what does that say? Is that by themselves, they couldn't get that bill passed. So let's find a way to get it onto something that it'll be hard for people to vote against. And obviously that's what happened. It was hard for the governor to veto it. It was hard for any supporters who we had in the general assembly to vote against it. Obviously, there were some who did. Um but I believe they were all on the house side. And so I don't know that even our staunchest supporters could derail this train as we move forward. I don't know how you, how do you fix this? This is kind of like my, my analysis or when I talk about when you squeeze out toothpaste, it's hard to get it back in the tube. Well, I think this toothpaste was squeezed out last Thursday night and then last Friday morning or Friday a week ago, it was passed that toothpaste is out there. How do we, we can't reconcile it now, it's too late for that. And I think now any, any negotiations and any hope we have. It lies with the superintendent of public instruction and it lies with what ability they left in the hands of the State Board of Education. And let me just say this on behalf of the state board, especially Eric Davis and Alan Duncan. My hats off to them. They worked with us hand in glove, uh, their attorney work with our attorney. Uh, and, and we had a, a relationship throughout this year. So it isn't like we haven't worked with the State Board of Education. What I believe is we haven't worked with them the way they wanted us to work with them. And obviously they're not too happy with them because they cut them out of this current memorandum. So, you know, I guess there's a lot of, you know, madness to go around. All right, we'll go to Eric and then Earl and then we'll let Nick close us out. All right, Eric, like you, Eric Beli and Witn again. Um, uh, you said you don't want to talk about New Bern, New Bern is very much in my viewing area and I just wanted to make sure I can continue to convey properly to my viewers. Uh, probation is what they were given for this season and we just didn't understand the lengths of what that means from y'all. Well, probation in and of itself simply means that the NCHSA A staff as we continue to do what we do, we'll, we'll just be watching, um, we believe that Craven County and New Bern High School have done their due diligence. They're on the right path to move beyond this. And so they have said here are the things that we're going to do. They've shared some things that they have put in place. So all we'll be doing is just watching, will there be anything else that pops up that would suggest that there's a lack of institutional control or, or there's some things that we need to monitor. That's what probation means. It does not mean that new Bern

High school football team. If it qualifies, would not be able to make the playoffs. So that's really all that I'm gonna say about that. So hopefully that defines that for you. Yeah, I just, we weren't sure what it meant as far as their players that weren't involved, uh, that for this season. So thank you for that clarification. Earl Vaughn Earl, where are you? We can come back to her if you need to is another one. yeah, Earl had unm muted himself. All right, we'll go ahead and Earl, are you there? Ok. We'll go ahead and go to, uh, Nick Stevens. Uh, you, you mentioned the ejections briefly just a few minutes ago. Um, real quick are, are ejections up this fall compared to last fall. Well, and I'll be honest with you, Nick, I haven't had time to sit down. I've been a little bit consumed up late, but I haven't had an opportunity to really sit down and look at where we are today versus where we were at this time last year or even to look at it in terms of it's the totality of those. So I don't want to go out on a limb to say yes, they're up, I would be surprised if they aren't up, uh, just because of the number of fights. Um, you know, so it, it appears to me that they're up, but I'm not for certain. And, uh, as you said, you guys can no longer find people for things like fighting. Um, and the, the rule about making a team eligible for the playoffs, um, if they have three or more players fighting, uh, has been changed, that's the case. Do you think that those two things have directly contributed to what we are potentially seeing with the number of injections and, and fights? I, I think, I think so. Um, if I'm a player now, keep in mind y'all, I, I never been in a fight in my life, a physical fight. So, I mean, I just didn't fight. Um, so if I were though, and I thought that, well, you know, if I just throw a punch and hit him upside the head, I, all I have to do is miss one game. That's so what it's worth it to me then I think that just in the back of the minds of some folk, some of our students, that's what they do. Now, I can say that because I am around some people periodically who will tell me these are adults as they're comparing their own style of doing things. They said, well, that, that's not a big deal, just go ahead and hit them and then you just worry about it later. So I do think that and I think we have some athletic directors who are concerned. I actually had an athletic director in the western part of the state who called me the very first time that I sent out the chart and said, well, Cube, don't you think if we had more than just one game suspension that it might change? He said, I do. He said, I, I think that that's part of what we have happening now and, and Nick, we're seeing even more of the, the fighting or the altercations in the middle of the field. I was just looking at a video yesterday of an altercation between two teams in soccer. And so I think when there are no, no constraints, there's nothing that keeps me grounded. So that as I'm running out there, if we just had that idea that, oh I got, I'm not gonna get ejected for two games, I'm backing up or I'm not going, uh that could make a difference. So I think there is a direct correlation with that. Um That's unfortunate. The only rule that is in place now relative to fighting is that if you fight, you identify who the fighters are, they miss one game, same as anybody who um, flagrant contact. Uh That's the same penalty. If I throw a punch, it's the same as if I do something deliberate, I take somebody down as they're going in for a layup,

same penalty. Now, if I get two of those ejections, uh in a contest, there is the allowance for that individual now to miss two contests. Uh, but most of the time we don't see that happening, that if I as the individual get, get an injection in this game, I'm not going to get a, get another one in, in football or soccer or volleyball two weeks later. That, that, that typically does not occur so that I'd have to sit two games. Um, so that's unfortunate. And, uh, but if you turn back the hands of time, not allowing a team to get into the playoffs started this whole thing. So, you know, who knows what would have happened if we still were doing that? Is it still the rule that if you leave the bench during a fight, you're considered part of the fight? Yes. Yes, that's still in place. Thank you, Brandon. I see a couple of the, uh, where folk had written over here. You wanna go ahead and address those as well? Ok. I was trying to save us a little time, but that's fine. We have a question from David Keever from the Lincoln Times News. How could this alter realignment and the possible move to seven classifications? Well, in the, in the, um, the new bill, it, it does indicate that there has to be a provision for, um, for classification, um, that it is based solely on AD M so we knew that um in the current memorandum of understanding that we've been operating under, so we've been proceeding with the idea that there will be a, a new alignment put in place for the starting in 2025. So we've been operating that way. So I don't think that'll have a, an impact on the numbers unless of course, the NCHSA is no longer the administering organization. Um And uh so I think that stays on track and uh we'll continue to work with uh with the membership uh as we move forward to try to know we're, uh we're going to continue to operate as though we're going to be that, that entity uh in 24 25 with the understanding that that may not be, we may not be. And so it would be up to someone else to figure that out. The other question here from Scott Rogers, IBX media commissioner. How will this affect officials and referees in North Carolina in terms of booking associations? And that there isn't a current supervisor of officials? Ok. So without a current supervisor, official, director of officiating programs, uh I think we've been doing pretty good. Um I think that's a credit to the regional supervisors we have across the state. Their commitment is to the boys and girls in their areas for all of the sports. Um And so they're doing their part to uh continue to recruit, to train, to educate and then to assign officials. So I don't anticipate that those individuals will stop or let down their commitment to boys and girls, at least through this um through this year, just as us, I think our officials association might take a wait and see attitude. Uh I, I, you know, as we move throughout the year, is it going to be the NCHSA A? If it's not us, the answer, the question might be asked if not them, who and are we going to continue to do for that other entity like we have done with the NCHSA A? Because we do have that established relationship. We have the history with them. Um And so, uh we'll continue to March on, uh, once we can kind of sort through everything, get a better feel for what it looks like as we move forward. We, we fully want, we do want to hire a director of uh officiating services. But in the meantime, what I've done, um and my staff, we have leaned heavily on our regional supervisors. Uh We have a

liaison on our board of directors, Albert Lasseter. Uh we, we lean on him. Uh, so we will continue to do that uh as we need to, when we have a question we can answer. Uh, we call up one of our regional supervisors and they help us, we have a blueprint of how to assign officials relative to the playoffs. So as the playoffs come, if we need to uh, if we're still the ones who will be making those assignment of the association for those contests, uh, we still have the chart that we've used for years and, uh, we can use that and, and our staff is, uh, is very capable of being able to assign those associations as we move along. Remember the first rounds, the schools are going to choose anyway. Uh And so it's only when we get into the later rounds that we would be making those decisions. So I have great confidence in my directors of uh sports and championships and I have great confidence in our regional supervisors to help us as we, as we need them to. And, and just as an example of, of that, uh our basketball, uh well, we'll start with tomorrow tomorrow in our office. We have our supervisors of uh of wrestling. Our wrestling supervisors will be here in the office. And so we have someone uh who will come in and go over the NFHS rules, they will discuss those rules, make sure that they understand them. And then those regional supervisors go back into their locales, they conduct meetings and they do the training and make sure that their officials can read the rulebook, know what the changes are, know what the points of emphasis are. Um And so that's tomorrow, then our basketball reg no supervisors will also be conducting those in-person clinics uh for officials across the state. So I believe our officials are committed to doing what they can to make sure that, you know, our sports, um, and championships occur. Um, that's what we've done for all these many years and I don't see them stopping now. So we will continue to, to work hard to, to help our officials to help our regional supervisors while in turn, they're helping us. Um, Earl, did you get unmm muted? I think I'm back. All right, Earl. Ok, Earl Vaughn from City View Q I stood on the sidelines with Charlie Adams in 1981 when Terry Sanford played at South Mecklenburg in four, a championship game. That time South Meckel had a woefully inadequate field. The Terry Sanford people had pleaded all week long that they play that game, uh, in Memorial Stadium, downtown Seth Mecklenburg refused. They claimed that they had earned the right to a home game, earned it only because it happened to be the West rotation to host the championship that year. But, uh, my question is with the comments that you've been making today, uh, and with apologies to, uh, Michael J Fox. Uh, are we headed back to the future with, uh, as far as championship venues and other things? Uh, you know, that, uh, we've gotten used to now that, uh, are gonna be stripped away from us, Earl, that's, that's highly possible. Um, since we will be limited perhaps in our ability to, you know, to bring in those operational dollars And as I've said, in order for us to have great championships in those venues, it might mean now that we do have to go back and have some of those championships in our home on our member schools, uh, fields and in their gyms. Um, I hope we're able to, to, to get beyond that. Um, and that we're able to find a way. Uh, again, we'll continue with the help of our attorneys. We'll still have to try to figure out how

all that's going to work. Um, but with seven classifications and eight classification, that's probably going to happen anyway, Earl, because I don't know that there are enough facilities to be able to accommodate that many championships. Uh, even without this legislation, um, we were going to be looking at that trying to figure out whether we needed to go back. But I do believe that, uh, with our hands being tied, so to speak, uh, it will force us to have to look to our membership, uh, to help host some of these events. Thank you. Yes, sir. Thank you, Earl. And thank you, everyone that asks questions today. Um, I think we've accomplished all the ones that got into the chat and there aren't any, uh, hands raised anymore. If you have questions later in the day, please feel free to email me or any time. That's what I'm here for Brandon at NCHSA A dot org. Uh, again, thank you for your time. This morning and, uh, we look forward to working with you in the future and, and let me just say this before we sign off. Thank all of you for availing yourselves to be, to be here to, to listen to me ramble on about some things that I don't know yet. Uh, but I also want to thank you for covering, uh, education based athletics. Uh, it, it is, um, you know, Charlie Adams used to say it's the front porch of our schools and I still believe that and, uh, so we appreciate you telling those stories and let's try to find those positive stories that you can continue to tell and that we not focus on the negative all of the time, but there's some good things that are happening and, uh, we appreciate you for what you do. Thank you very much.

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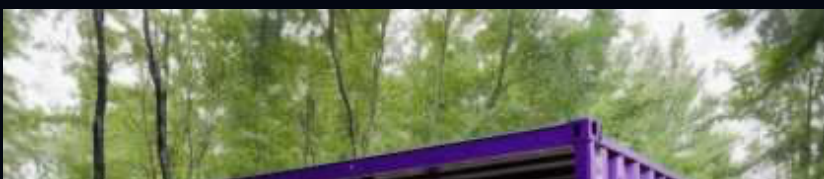
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