Protect College Sports Act of 2026

(As reported by the Senate Commerce Committee)

Summary of key provisions prepared by Greenberg Traurig and
Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, **updated June 22, 2026**

ATHLETE ELIGIBILITY AND WELL-BEING

Athlete Eligibility.

- Age-based, five-year eligibility. Age-based, five-year eligibility framework beginning at 19, or date of first collegiate enrollment, whichever comes first (with exceptions).
- Performance enhancing drug use or sports wagering. Permits athlete eligibility restrictions resulting from use of an illegal or performance enhancing drug or participation in sports wagering activities.

Transfers. Guarantees one transfer without losing eligibility; includes additional transfer opportunities without losing eligibility under specific conditions like head coach departure, discontinued sports, graduate study, or victim of sexual assault or harassment by an individual associated with the institution. Codifies transfer portal windows.

Athlete role in governance. Requires at least one-third of athletic association governing boards or other committees with rulemaking authority to consist of current or recent former student athletes.

Agents. Requires registration; amends federal law to cover NIL activity; 5% cap on agent fees.

Coverage of medical expenses after collegiate eligibility. Extends post-eligibility medical coverage by institutions to five years for injury or illness incurred through participation in intercollegiate sport. Division I institutions that generate less than $20 million annually in athletics revenue and demonstrate financial hardship will have access to a national fund of at least $60 million annually to provide financial resources to enable institutions to meet the new post-eligibility medical coverage requirements.

Employee status of athletes. The bill is neutral on “whether student athletes are employees or non-employees.” No alteration to current status.

NIL protection and disclosure. Protects athlete rights to earn NIL compensation; requires disclosure of contracts between athletes and third parties (entities other than institution) over $600. Requires a governing body to maintain a database for athletes and their agents to estimate fair market value for NIL agreements.

Scholarships. Athletics scholarships cannot be revoked based on athletic performance, injury, or roster management.

Office of the Student Athlete Ombudsman. The NCAA (or any successor national association) must establish an independent office to provide confidential, free advice about their rights and assist in the resolution of concerns with institution, conference, or national association.

National Governance Authority and Enforcement

Institutional Transparency. Requires institutions to submit a financial report to the national governing body annually; must also disclose the average number of hours athletes spend participating in their sport and their academic outcomes; requires public reporting by the national governing body of revenues and expenditures of institutions for each sports program.

Antitrust. Antitrust protection for national rules on athlete compensation, eligibility, transfers, agent oversight; SBA antitrust exemption on media rights. The antitrust protection does not apply to a breach or termination of existing media rights agreements.

Athlete Compensation: Oversight and Enforcement

- House settlement revenue cap. Extends revenue cap after termination of *House* settlement, with inflation adjustments.

- Pay-for-play. Prevents pay-for-play or other arrangements designed to evade "Institutional NIL/revenue sharing" cap.

State preemption. Preempts conflicting state laws on NIL, transfers, and eligibility.

Ban on conference mergers. Bans conferences with annual revenues of over $700 million from consolidating or acquiring other conferences' assets unless the number of institutions in the new conference created includes at least 75% of the FBS membership.

Recruiting and tampering. NCAA may enforce specific rules against improper recruiting, transfer tampering, and inducements outside of designated two-to-five week windows.

Mid-sized conferences. The national governing body and any rulemaking committees must include "adequate representation" of conferences with annual revenues under $500 million.

Other major provisions

Women's and collegiate Olympic sports. The NCAA cannot reduce the minimum competitions, minimum participants on a varsity sports team, or the number of varsity sports teams, including the number of men's and women's varsity sports teams or Olympic varsity sports teams, that an institution must sponsor for membership in Division I and the FBS. There are additional threshold requirements for individual institutions on offering and maintaining at least as many athletics scholarships and roster spots for non-revenue generating sports as those provided in the 2024-25 academic year for athletics programs that generate at least $50 million annually. This requirement sunsets after four years for programs with $50-80 million in athletics revenue and after nine years for programs that generate more than $90 million in athletics revenue. Other related provisions:

- Para-athletes who are walk-ons are not subject to *House* settlement mandated roster limits
- Public reporting on women's and Olympic sports data

Congressional Commission. Establishes a congressional commission to study long-term reforms, including compensation structures and governance. Commission will have 24 members, with two members being representatives of Historically Black Colleges and

Universities and two members being representatives of mid-sized conferences (those with revenues under $500 million).

Coach restrictions. Prevents FBS football coaches from leaving mid-season. For athletics programs with annual budgets above $80 million, coach or general manager compensation above $500,000 can only be paid from college sports revenues or donations to the athletic department.

National Revenue and Collective Media Rights

Football season limits. Moves protected broadcast periods for college and high school football to one week earlier in September and one week later in December; determines college football season should end by January 8.

Media rights. Schools and conferences may form a covered entity (with antitrust protection) to sell certain college media rights, provided that 75% of current FBS schools agree; establishes revenue distribution rules; conditions include protection of women's and Olympic sports, preservation of certain rivalries. (see below for more details on Media rights)

More on the Collective Media Rights Optionality:

Collective media rights definition. Defines "collective media rights revenue" broadly as "revenue derived from the sale or transfer of the media rights of the member institutions and member conferences." However, NCAA basketball tournament rights cannot be transferred (see below). The bill requires a unanimous vote of members of the media rights entity for "which media rights shall be contributed."

> Exclusion of NCAA basketball tournament rights. All schools participating in the media rights entity are required to contribute all media rights agreed upon, with the exception of NCAA basketball tournament rights. The new media rights entity has no authority to "negotiate, sell, license, sublicense or otherwise transfer on a pooled basis" the NCAA basketball tournament rights.

Threshold to trigger SBA antitrust exemption. Membership in the media rights negotiating entity is voluntary, but 75% of FBS institutions must participate in order for the SBA antitrust exemption to apply.

Revenue distribution and formula for collective media rights.
Women's and Olympic sports. Among the conditions for receiving the antitrust exemption relating to media rights, each school receiving revenue from the collective media rights entity must maintain at least as many scholarships and roster spots for women's and Olympic sports as in 2024-25. The media rights negotiating entity must also make reasonable efforts to promote and distribute media rights for non-revenue sports.

Unanimous votes. The media rights entity must have a unanimous vote for (a) the allocation of media rights revenue, or (b) determination of which media rights will be contributed to the entity.

Exclusion of CFP revenues from minimum distribution calculation. The bill guarantees that each school in the media rights negotiating entity gets at least as much revenue as its highest single year of media rights distribution from 2021-22 through 2024-25, but it excludes CFP revenues. This appears intended to keep schools from selecting a year that was significantly higher because they made the football playoffs. It does not prohibit CFP media rights from being included in the collective entities' media rights negotiations. (This calculation also does not count NCAA basketball tournament revenues.)

Additional amount distributed equally to FBS schools. The bill requires a distribution of not less than 15% of remaining revenues after the minimum distribution (described above) equally among all schools that received revenues from FBS competition in 2024-25. It is unclear if non-football revenues are counted in this calculation. Note that this distribution appears to exclude new FBS schools (entering FBS after 2024-25) from sharing in the "FBS distribution only."

RESOURCES:

Link to June 18, 2026, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation release: "Protect College Sports Act Heads to Senate Floor"