

# Status of Federal Efforts to Regulate College Sports

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May 9, 2026

## Executive Summary

On July 2025, [two committees in the U.S. House of Representatives voted to advance the SCORE Act -- comprehensive legislation addressing college sports](#). However, the partisan committee debate on these bills and the demands from some Members for additional changes to the bill have thus far prevented a vote by the full U.S. House. A recent media report indicates that House leadership may be positioning the SCORE Act for a floor vote during the week of May 18.

In the Senate, there have been ongoing efforts to develop a bipartisan proposal in the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, which is the main committee of jurisdiction over college sports issues. But to date there is no bipartisan agreement. Senators will continue to negotiate, and [time constraints may force consideration of a narrower bill](#) than the legislation being considered in the House.

In April 2026, President Trump issued an Executive Order addressing many of the issues in the SCORE Act with an effective date of August 1, 2026. However, the order is likely to be subject to litigation challenging the legal authority and the enforcement mechanisms.

These developments are described below in further detail.

## Trump Executive Order

On April 3, 2026, President Trump issued [Executive Order 14400 \(EO\), “Urgent National Action to Save College Sports.”](#) The EO addresses athlete eligibility, transfers, NIL payments, revenue sharing, and agents, among other topics. Its primary enforcement mechanism is to link federal grants and contracts to colleges and universities to compliance with the rules specified in the EO. It also strongly encourages Congress to “pass legislation that satisfactorily addresses these issues,” but notes that “further delay is not an option given what is at stake.” The EO envisions that most of its directives will be in place by August 1, 2026.

Among the provisions in the EO:

**Enforcement:** directs the federal Office of Management and Budget to issue guidance to “contracting and grantmaking agencies” to ensure compliance with the order, enforced through suspension and disbarment policies

**Eligibility:** directs the NCAA to develop “age-based eligibility limits” and limit participation to a 5-year period, with exceptions for military service, missionary service, and other absences if in the public interest

**Transfers:** limited to one time during the 5-year period with immediate playing eligibility, and one additional time post-graduate

**Agents:** directs NCAA to develop a national student-athlete agent registry; directs the FCC to enforce federal law against violations by agents

**Information Collection:** directs Department of Education to require regular reporting on the total number of roster spots by varsity team and the total amount spent on “athletically related student aid or other payments” for men’s and women’s teams overall

**Fraudulent NIL scheme:** defined to include payment for NIL services “above the actual fair market value”; does not include (a) revenue sharing payments from colleges or (b) payments from third parties not affiliated with the college for the promotion of goods or services

**Revenue Sharing and Women’s and Olympic sports:** directs NCAA to implement revenue sharing “in a manner that preserves or expands scholarships and collegiate athletic opportunities in women’s and Olympic sports”

**Pay-for-Play Payments:** directs NCAA to prohibit pay-for-play payments, including from collectives

**Medical Care:** directs NCAA to develop rules to provide coverage for athletics-related injuries during and after playing career

**Conflicting State Laws:** directs the Attorney General to “take appropriate measures to further meritorious actions to invalidate State laws that conflict with interstate intercollegiate athletic governing body rules”

The Executive Order was developed after discussions at a White House roundtable on March 6, 2026. The roundtable also led to the formation of an oversight board and five committees focused on legislation, rules, NCAA reform, media rights, and player-agent relationships. These committees have been meeting and developing written proposals to be shared with Congressional leaders and Administration officials. A preliminary draft recommends initial legislative focus on eligibility and transfers, revenue sharing levels and salary caps, cost controls, antitrust protection and state preemption. This would be followed by NCAA governance reforms, including an NCAA “task force” for two years with antitrust protection and state preemption, followed by a new Permanent Governing Body.

### **U.S. House of Representatives**

On July 23, 2025, two House committees reported their portions of the **“Student Compensation and Opportunity through Rights and Endorsements (SCORE) Act”** (H.R. 4312) on party-line votes (the legislation passed the Energy and Commerce Committee 30 to 23, and the Education and the Workforce Committee 18 to 17).

Before most House legislation is brought to the floor, the House will pass a Rule setting the terms for debate and amendments that can be offered for a specific bill. On December 2, 2025, the House passed the Rule (H. Res. 916) governing debate on the SCORE Act, 210 to 209. The Rule allowed for one hour of debate with no amendments. However, because the vote count on final passage of the SCORE Act was in doubt, the bill was never brought to the floor.

Negotiations on possible modifications to the bill have occurred between House Majority Leader Steve Scalise (R-LA), Rep. Chip Roy (R-TX) (one of three Republicans to vote against the Rule), and other interested parties.

On March 6, 2026, at a White House roundtable on college sports, House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) provided a status report on the SCORE Act. “We’re right on the verge of passage in the House, and we now think we have the votes to do that,” Johnson said. “We believe we’ll have every Republican now, and we have double digit support of at least [some] Democrats.”

However, to date the SCORE Act remains subject to negotiation. Among the provisions reportedly being discussed are NCAA structural changes, coaches’ salaries, athlete transfer rules, and disclosure of athletic department spending.

Key provisions of the SCORE Act considered by two House committees:

**NIL Payments:** creates a single national standard; third party NIL must meet fair market value test; establishes minimum institutional athlete compensation cap using the 22% *House settlement* formula

**Transfer Rules:** governing body must allow at least one transfer with immediate eligibility

**Antitrust Exemption:** includes a broad antitrust exemption covering NIL disclosure, recruiting timelines, NIL revenue sharing limits, eligibility, playing seasons, and championship selection criteria

**State Preemption:** preempts state laws with respect to athlete compensation, payments, benefits, employment status, eligibility, and academic standards

**Athlete Employment Status:** states that no athlete participating in intercollegiate athletics competition may be considered an employee of an institution

**Athlete Agents:** requires agent disclosure with governing body, written consent for unregistered agent representation, and limits agent compensation to 5% for endorsement contracts

**Women’s and Olympic Sports:** requires a minimum of 16 varsity sports for any institution with one or more coaches being paid \$250,000 or more in base salary

### **U.S. Senate**

The Senate Commerce Committee has primary jurisdiction over legislation relating to college sports. Chairman Ted Cruz (R-TX) and ranking Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) have had ongoing discussions to develop a bipartisan solution. Other key players on the committee include Sens. Wicker (R-MS), Moran (R-KS), Blackburn (R-TN), Schmitt (R-MO), Klobuchar (D-MN), and Schatz (D-HI). Several Senators not on the committee have also been active, including Sens. Blumenthal (D-CT), Booker (D-NJ), and Coons (D-DE).

Most observers believe that should the SCORE Act pass the U.S. House, it will need significant changes to pass the U.S. Senate. Under Senate procedures, at least 60 votes are likely to be needed, meaning that at least seven Democratic Senators must be on board.

On September 29, 2025, Senators Cantwell, Booker and Blumenthal introduced the **Student Athlete Fairness and Enforcement (SAFE) Act** (S.2932) as an alternative to the SCORE Act. The SAFE Act adds significant provisions relating to the distribution of media revenues, **amending the Sports Broadcasting Act** to allow schools to pool media rights. It includes a narrow antitrust exemption for agreements to distribute media revenues, but not the broader antitrust protections of the SCORE Act. The SAFE Act also includes provisions addressing **NIL contracts, transfer rules, agent regulation, protection of non-revenue sports, and health and safety** provisions.

On March 6, 2026, Senators Cantwell and Schmitt circulated a bipartisan compromise on amending the Sports Broadcasting Act. The proposal, called the **College Sports Competitiveness Act (CSCA)**, is limited to media rights issues and is intended to be included in a broader legislative package. It authorizes a voluntary association to **pool collective media rights revenue from** football with the objective of increasing media rights revenue through such consolidation. A mandated distribution formula for FBS football revenues would be based in part on contributions to the revenue stream and a smaller part (25%) distributed equally to schools. Institutions receiving a distribution of FBS football media revenues must maintain scholarship and roster sizes for **women's and non-revenue sports** at the '23-'24 level or higher

With time becoming more of a factor in legislative discussions, on March 24, 2026, Sen. Tuberville (R-AL) introduced the **Student Athlete Act (SAA)** in an attempt to provide an alternative “skinny” bill containing urgent provisions that generally have bipartisan support. The bill would limit athlete **eligibility** to a single five-year period, limit **transfers** with immediate eligibility to one time, require schools to **honor scholarships** for students who remain in good standing, and **preempt state laws** that conflict with these provisions.

Key Senators will need to make decisions in the coming weeks about the breadth of any potential compromise proposal, with limited time remaining in the session and the need for supermajority (60-vote) support in the Senate.