

Legislative Proposal: Reforming Youth Sports Governance and Ensuring Transparency in Oklahoma

Date: September 14, 2024

Subject: Legislative Proposal: Reforming Youth Sports Governance and Ensuring Transparency in Oklahoma

Senator Shane Jett

Oklahoma State Senate
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Dear Senator Jett,

I hope this message finds you well. I am reaching out to you to propose a set of legislative reforms aimed at addressing the systemic issues within youth sports governance, transparency, and access in Oklahoma. These recommendations are based on my doctoral research, *Integrity of the Game vs Economic Impact: The Oklahoma Business Plan*, as well as recent findings from the **State of Florida Attorney General vs USSSA RICO** case, which exposed widespread financial misconduct and monopolistic practices within the United States Specialty Sports Association (USSSA).

Youth sports are vital to the development of our communities, yet current governance structures have allowed for financial mismanagement, lack of transparency, and inequitable access, particularly affecting families with limited financial means. I believe the following legislative changes can rectify these issues and ensure Oklahoma becomes a leader in youth sports governance reform.

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Proposed Legislative Changes

1. Mandate Financial Transparency for Youth Sports Organizations

Proposal: Enact legislation that requires all youth sports organizations operating in Oklahoma, particularly those with non-profit status, to provide annual public financial reports. These reports should include detailed breakdowns of revenue sources, expenses, and how funds are allocated.

Purpose: This legislation would ensure accountability in how registration fees, tournament earnings, and sponsorship money are used. Greater transparency would deter financial misconduct and provide stakeholders with necessary oversight.

2. Establish Independent Audits for Large-Scale Sports Organizations

Proposal: Mandate regular independent financial audits for any youth sports organization that manages funds over \$500,000 annually. This would apply to national organizations like USSSA as well as major regional associations.

Purpose: Independent audits will prevent fraudulent activity and ensure that organizations handling significant funds are held accountable to the public. This was a central issue exposed in the USSSA RICO case.

3. Create a Youth Sports Oversight Commission

Proposal: Establish a **Youth Sports Oversight Commission** at the state level, tasked with monitoring youth sports organizations, investigating misconduct, and ensuring financial transparency. The commission would handle complaints, develop best practices, and issue guidelines for youth sports governance.

Purpose: A dedicated oversight body will ensure that youth sports organizations are operating transparently and in the best interests of the community. It will also provide an impartial avenue for addressing complaints and enforcing accountability.

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4. Introduce Anti-Monopoly Regulations for Youth Sports

Proposal: Introduce legislation that prevents a single organization from monopolizing youth sports within Oklahoma. The law would ensure that multiple organizations can operate and offer youth sports programs, fostering competition and providing families with more choices.

Purpose: The USSSA RICO case revealed how monopolistic control in youth sports leads to financial misconduct and limited access. Promoting competition among organizations will ensure a healthier and more equitable youth sports environment.

5. Implement Mandatory Conflict of Interest Policies

Proposal: Require all youth sports organizations to adopt and enforce strict conflict of interest policies, covering relationships between state directors, tournament organizers, and officials. This would prevent financial or operational conflicts from influencing decisions that affect participants and their families.

Purpose: The relationship between key individuals in youth sports governance, such as **Rick and Wally Fortuna**, demonstrated how conflicts of interest can lead to financial mismanagement. Enforcing conflict of interest policies would promote greater integrity and transparency in decision-making.

6. Ensure Equitable Access to Youth Sports

Proposal: Create state-funded programs or funding mechanisms that ensure equitable access to youth sports for low-income families. This could include scholarships, subsidized registration fees, or state-supported community sports programs.

Purpose: One of the major findings in my research is that financial barriers prevent many families from participating in youth sports. This legislation would promote equitable access to sports for all children, regardless of economic background.

Conclusion and Request for Consideration

Integrity of the Game vs Economic Impact (Politics), The Oklahoma Business Plan

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Senator Jett, I believe these legislative proposals will greatly improve the governance of youth sports in Oklahoma and ensure that all children, regardless of their financial means, have access to safe and transparent sports programs. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and discuss these proposals in more detail, as I believe they align with your efforts to promote economic growth and community development in our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your thoughts on how we can work together to bring about these important changes.

Warm regards,
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