

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AGENDA**  
**December 10, 2020**  
**Video Conference**

1. Roll Call
2. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting
3. Election of Officers
  - President
  - Vice President
4. 2020 Regional Meetings

Regional Meetings in East, Middle, and West TN were held virtually on November 4th. There were 3 proposals for changes in the TSSAA Bylaws on the agenda for consideration. Supplement #1 contains the Minutes from the 2020 Regional Meetings.

- a. Proposed Addition to Article IV, Section 7 (Rules of the Game) of the TSSAA Bylaws:

Religious headwear is permitted, provided it is not abrasive, hard, or dangerous to the participant and any other player, and must be attached in such a way it is highly unlikely to come off during play. Religious headwear does not need to comply with any of the color restrictions defined in applicable sport uniform codes.

Religious headwear in wrestling must comply with the safety standards of the sport and be approved by the head coach and contest referee.

Hijabs, turbans, and yarmulkes are acceptable types of religious headwear.

Rationale:

On September 15, 2020, one of our Muslim female student athletes who wears a hijab was forbidden from playing in a freshman volleyball game due to a referee citing a rule from the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) handbook requiring state association approval for religious head coverings, with the rationale that it is a change in uniform that requires prior approval by TSSAA. We were not aware of this rule, and Valor student-athletes had in the past participated in TSSAA-sanctioned events while wearing a hijab.

This incident has caused tremendous harm in our community, and we ask TSSAA to come alongside us in taking steps to ensure that no Tennessee student-athlete faces an obstacle to exercise their religious freedom or engage in the joy of sports. TSSAA has the opportunity to join several other state associations in establishing a solution at the state level. The TSSAA may adopt a change in its bylaws recognizing that student-athletes may wear their

religious headwear in TSSAA events, provided that the headwear is not dangerous to student-athletes.

*Submitted by Valor College Prep*

- b. Proposed Change to Article II, Section 8 (Eighth Grade Participation) of the TSSAA Bylaws:

An eighth grade student is eligible to participate for a member school if he/she is enrolled at the school. A seventh grade student is eligible to participate for a member school in individual sports if he/she is enrolled at the school. Any student repeating the seventh or eighth grade shall not be eligible for high school participation during the year that the student is repeating the seventh or eighth grade. Participation as a seventh or eighth grader shall not reduce the number of semesters a student is allowed to participate after enrolling in the ninth grade.

Rationale:

Allowing 7<sup>th</sup> graders to become eligible for senior high sports could become a good resource for small schools that house grades K-12 or 6-12. This would allow more participation within the school for individual sports. There are situations where the school may have interest in a sport but they don't have enough students interested on a HS or MS level but they do have an interest with that sport as a whole. There are other cases where financially a school may be able to cover either a HS or MS team but if they are able to cover one, the school could add more sports to their program as a variety.

*Submitted by Memphis Rise Academy High School*

- c. Proposed Changes to Article IV, Section 8 (TSSAA Sports Calendar Definitions) of the TSSAA Bylaws:

**Off-Season**

Begins with the school's elimination from the post season tournament play in a particular sport and concludes with the end of the school year. Coaches may deliver instruction in an individual or team setting to no more than the stated number of players allotted for each particular sport (Basketball-3, Baseball-5, Softball-5, Football-7, and Soccer-6).

**Pre-Season Practice Rule**

Begins the first day of school until the first official day of practice in that particular sport. Coaches may deliver instruction in an individual or team setting to no more than the stated number of players allotted for each particular sport (Basketball-3, Baseball-5, Softball-5, Football-7, and Soccer-6).

Rationale:

Eliminate confusion amongst coaches. There are coaches around the state who believe as long as they stay within the allotted number they can work with their players in a team setting.

*Submitted by Pope John Paul II High School*

5. New Business

- a. Proposed Addition to Article I, Section 6 (Cooperative Programs) of the TSSAA Bylaws

Schools participating in a cooperative program shall combine their enrollments to find their classification for that sport.

Rationale:

It is a competitive advantage for a school of 500+ students to have a cooperative program with another school of 400+ students compete in a region against other schools of 375-541 students.

*Submitted by Tellico Plains High School*

6. Litigation Report