Section-by-Section Summary

Protect College Sports Act of 2026

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

Establishes the short title of the bill as the **Protect College Sports Act of 2026** and provides the table of contents.

TITLE I — Protection of Student Athletes and Fair Competition

Sec. 100. Definitions.

Defines key terms used throughout the title, including student athlete, NIL agreement, institution, conference, intercollegiate athletic association, collective, associated entity, and revenue share cap.

Sec. 101. Name, image, and likeness protections.

Protects student athletes' ability to earn NIL compensation and retain agents or legal representatives without losing eligibility, scholarships, or other institutional support. Requires disclosure of larger NIL agreements while protecting student-athlete privacy.

Sec. 102. Modifications to Sports Agent Responsibility and Trust Act.

Updates federal athlete-agent law to cover NIL activity, require agent registration, prohibit deceptive conduct, cap agent fees at five percent, and give student athletes a private right of action against abusive or fraudulent agents.

Sec. 103. Agent registry requirements.

Requires intercollegiate athletic associations to maintain a public, searchable registry of certified athlete agents and allows associations to decertify or fine agents who violate applicable rules.

Sec. 104. NIL disclosures and database.

Requires Division I institutions to report anonymized NIL data and any other compensation to a student athlete to their athletic association and requires the association to maintain a privacy-protected database to help student athletes and families assess fair market value.

Sec. 105. Academic protections.

Protects student athletes from athletic-department pressure over course or major selection, allows intercollegiate athletic associations and schools to limit time on the practice field to ensure progress toward a degree, preserves access to internships and campus opportunities, and prohibits scholarships from being reduced or revoked because of athletic performance, injury, illness, or roster management decisions.

Sec. 106. Medical coverage requirements.

Requires Division I schools to cover out-of-pocket medical costs for sports-related injuries during participation and for five years after an athlete's final competition. Also requires catastrophic injury coverage, second-opinion coverage, end-of-college physicals, and a $60 million medical trust fund to help smaller schools and athletes with long-term conditions. The trust fund may be gradually increased by $5 million each year (up to $100 million total) if the trust fund is depleted in any given year.

Sec. 107. Health, wellness, and safety standards.

Requires schools, conferences, and athletic associations to follow health and safety standards for serious sports-related risks, including concussions, heat illness, rhabdomyolysis, sickle cell trait, and asthma. Also requires safeguards against abuse, hazing, sexual misconduct, and improper interference with medical decisions.

Sec. 108. Office of the Student Athlete Ombudsman.

Requires an intercollegiate athletic association to establish an independent office to provide confidential, no-cost guidance to student athletes and help resolve concerns involving schools, conferences, or athletic associations.

Sec. 109. Comparable standards for facilities, services, and events.

Requires comparable standards for medical care, lodging, meals, rest, transportation, publicity and promotion, and facilities at championship events across similarly situated men's and women's athletic programs.

Sec. 110. Mid-season coaching transitions.

Prevents football coaches and key football staff from effectively taking over another FBS program during the same competitive season, including through recruiting, roster management, NIL activity, or game-planning functions.

Sec. 111. Student athlete representation.

Requires at least one-third of certain athletic association governing boards and rulemaking committees to consist of current or recent former student athletes.

Sec. 112. Transfer protections.

Guarantees student athletes one transfer without losing eligibility and establishes rules for additional transfers, including exceptions for coach departures, discontinued sports, graduate study, and certain misconduct-related circumstances.

Sec. 113. Eligibility to participate in intercollegiate sports.

Creates baseline eligibility rules for Division I or Division II college athletes, including academic standards, limits on being a professional athlete, a five-year eligibility framework, and exceptions for pregnancy, religious mission, military service, and other approved absences.

Sec. 114. Prohibited compensation and agreements.

Prohibits compensation arrangements and NIL agreements designed to evade the revenue-sharing cap or disguise pay-for-play inducements. Prohibits compensation for any purpose to a prospective student athlete except for certain attendance to a development camp or program. Establishes a retention fund that allows an institution to spend an additional $22.5 million above the revenue sharing cap each academic year to retain their own student athletes. Allows a school to spend an additional $5 million for retention (total $27.5 million) equal to the amount of compensation that the school provides to student athletes in non-revenue generating sports, including Olympic and women's sports. Requires multimedia rights holders and certain sponsors, apparel companies, and vendors who enter into or broker name, image, and likeness agreements with a student athlete to provide certain signed certifications, including that the NIL agreement's compensation or terms did not originate from the student athlete's institution.
Preserves institutional NIL agreements and legitimate education- and athletics-related benefits allowed under the House settlement framework. Requires an institution with more than $80 million in athletic revenue to not compensate coaching personnel more than $500,000 by diverting or using funds from any source other than college sports revenue or a donation or contribution to the institution's athletic department.

Sec. 115. Extension of revenue share cap.

Terminates the revenue share cap and retention fund upon expiration or termination of the House settlement, unless Congress enacts a joint resolution of approval to continue such cap and retention fund. Provides the parliamentary procedure for Congressional consideration of such joint resolution of approval.**Sec. 116. Commission on the Future of College Athletics.**

Establishes a bipartisan Congressional Commission to study the future of college athletics, including athlete compensation, Olympic and women's sports, spending limits, health and safety, agent rules, and the long-term structure of college sports.

Sec. 117. Recruitment and tampering.

Allows athletic associations to enforce rules against improper recruiting, transfer tampering, and inducements outside designated windows or without a student athlete's affirmative consent.

Sec. 118. Limitation on liability.

Provides targeted antitrust protection for schools, conferences, and athletic associations that enforce the bill's rules on compensation, eligibility, transfers, agent oversight, recruitment and tampering, and related matters. Allows an intercollegiate athletic association or conference to designate an entity pursuant to the House settlement framework to enforce revenue sharing cap under the House settlement.

Sec. 119. Private right of action.

Allows student athletes and other affected parties to bring civil actions for specified violations of the Act, subject to notice-and-cure requirements and other limits.

Sec. 120. Whistleblower protection.

Protects student athletes, employees, contractors, and others from retaliation for reporting or participating in proceedings involving suspected violations of the Act or Title IX.

Sec. 121. Relationship to existing law.

Preempts conflicting state and local laws governing NIL, transfers, and eligibility while preserving areas such as civil rights, tort, criminal, privacy, contract, trademark, copyright, consumer protection, and campus safety law.

Sec. 122. Neutrality on employment status.

Clarifies that the Act does not decide whether student athletes are employees or non-employees.

Sec. 123. Applicability.

Provides that section 113(c)(1)(B) (sports gambling activities) applies to actions or proceedings pending on or commenced after enactment. Provides that the PCSA shall not apply to any action or proceeding commenced prior to enactment (including claims for monetary relief) except if an action or proceeding allows a D1 or D2 student athlete to have more than 5 years of eligibility or undermines the revenue share cap in the House settlement.

Sec. 124. Severability.

Provides that if one provision is held invalid, the rest of the title remains in effect.

Sec. 125. Protection of women's sports and Olympic sports.

Prohibits NCAA from reducing the number of sports, including minimum participants of such sport, an institution must sponsor to be a member of Division I or the Football Bowl Subdivision. Requires certain large and mid-sized institutions to offer and maintain the same grant-in-aid opportunities and roster spots for non-revenue generating sports, including Olympic and women's sports as 2024–2025 levels. Further ensures that an institution and athletic director of an institution retain full authority to include para athletes on their sports roster spots for walk-ons without violating the roster limits under the House settlement.

Sec. 126. Mid-sized conference representation on intercollegiate athletic association governing boards.

Requires an intercollegiate athletic association with a mid-sized conference to ensure adequate representation of such conferences on its governing boards and rulemaking committees.

Sec. 127. Title IX savings clause

Clarifies that nothing in this Title or amendments by this title shall be construed to override, modify, or amend the applicability of Title IX.

Sec. 128. Protecting opportunities for American student athletes.

Provides that it is the policy of the United States that any institution of higher education participating in college athletics should prioritize domestic student athletes when selecting student athletes and awarding athletic opportunities on the institution's varsity sports team.

Sec. 129. Disclosure of foreign financing of intercollegiate athletics.

Requires an institution, conference, and intercollegiate athletic association to disclose all amounts over $600 related to intercollegiate athletics from a foreign government, a foreign adversary, a state-owned enterprise, or a sovereign wealth fund.

TITLE II — Sports Broadcasting

Sec. 201. Definitions.

Updates the Sports Broadcasting Act of 1961 with definitions needed for the college sports media-rights framework.

Sec. 202. Limitation on liability for collegiate sports broadcasts.

Creates a targeted antitrust exemption allowing schools and conferences to voluntarily form a covered entity to pool and sell certain college sports media rights, provided 75 percent of current FBS schools agree to do so, subject to the bill's guardrails.

Sec. 203. Requirements for entities selling media rights.

Establishes the conditions a covered media-rights entity must meet, including open membership terms, voting protections, revenue-distribution rules, support for the medical fund, protection of women's and Olympic sports (including best efforts to promote and distributes the media rights of such sports), and preservation of both in-conference and certain out-of-conference rivalries.

Sec. 204. Local broadcast access for football and basketball.

Requires at least one free local broadcast option for football and basketball games in the local market of each participating school, while preserving national and regional media agreements.

Sec. 205. Prohibition on certain conference mergers and acquisitions.

Bars certain large-revenue conferences from consolidating with or acquiring other conferences or "covered institutions" that have competed in intercollegiate football as a member of a large-revenue conference within the last three years. Sunsets the three-year waiting period after six years. Permits a large-revenue conference to acquire an institution that is not a covered institution if such conference does not exceed 20 member institutions. Prohibits any entity from consolidating with or acquiring a covered institution (defined as an institution that has competed in intercollegiate football as a member of a large-revenue conference within the last five years) for the purpose of creating a new conference or intercollegiate athletic association.

Sec. 206. Football contest limitations.

Provides that the college football season and postseason should conclude by January 8, to the extent practicable. Requires any joint agreement to protect the broadcast window for Army-Navy football game.

Sec. 207. Media rights utilization for sports other than football and basketball.

Requires distributors that acquire media rights for non-football and non-basketball college sports to actually make those competitions reasonably available to the public, or risk having the rights revert for resale or relicensing.

TITLE III — HBCU SPORTS MEDIA AND CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

Sec. 301. Short title.

Provides that the short title of Title III is the "HBCU Sports Media and Connectivity Program".**Sec. 302. Grants for improvement of broadband, technology, media, and sports broadcast infrastructure of HBCUs.**

Establishes a grant program administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration within the Department of Commerce to support long-term improvements to

broadband, information technology, media infrastructure, including infrastructure for the production, transmission, and distribution of live coverage of college athletic events, and local journalism for student learning.

Sec. 303. Grant uses.

Provides the permitted uses for grants distributed under the program, including for high-speed broadband internet infrastructure, equipment or infrastructure used for training and education in digital media, laboratories or research facilities relating to fields of communication technology, media production facilities, and video programming and distribution equipment.

Sec. 304. Coordination.

Requires the Assistant Secretary of Commerce to consult with the Secretary of Education and coordinate with the Federal Communication Commission, state broadband offices, other federal agencies, intercollegiate athletic associations, and the Director of the Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives to ensure efficient administration of the grant program, avoid funding duplication, and maximize student achievement.

Sec. 305. Reports and evaluation.

Requires the Assistant Secretary of Commerce to consult with the Secretary of Education and submit a report to Congress within 2 years of enactment that details the projects carried out with grant funds awarded under the program. Provides reporting requirements for grant recipients.

Sec. 306. Definitions.

Provides the definitions used within Title III for establishment of the grant program.

Sec. 307. Authorization of appropriations.

Authorizes appropriations totaling $180,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2027 through 2032 to carry out Title III.