CLIENT ALERTS & INSIGHTS

NCAA President Calls for Stiffer State Laws on Sports Betting Following NBA Betting Scandal and Revised Legislation Permitting Sports Betting for D-II and D-III Athletes

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Key Takeaways

- **The NCAA President is urging states to impose tougher penalties for illegal sports betting after a high-profile NBA betting scandal, while the NCAA has also revised its rules to allow Division II and III athletes and staff to bet on professional sports.**
- **These developments highlight growing risks for colleges and universities, including increased scrutiny, potential for betting-related scandals, and a rise in harassment and integrity concerns as sports betting becomes more accessible to student athletes.**
- **Colleges and universities should review and strengthen their compliance programs, educate athletes and staff on betting risks, and stay updated on evolving state laws and NCAA policies to mitigate legal and reputational risks.**

On October 23, 2025, NCAA President Charlie Baker issued a statement calling for stiffer penalties at the state level for illegal sports betting schemes following the arrest of two NBA coaches and an NBA player for their role in an elaborate bet-fixing scheme uncovered by the FBI and other federal law enforcement agencies. The statement comes on the heels of the NCAA announcing that D-II and D-III Management Councils adopted legislation that will allow athletes and staff in those divisions to bet on professional sports. Surprisingly, Baker's statement also foreshadowed breaking news issued over the weekend surrounding a possible player-led betting scandal at Eastern Michigan University.

"We are grateful for federal law enforcement's efforts to stamp out illegal sports betting, and I am proud that the NCAA continues to have the most aggressive competition integrity policies in place." Baker continued, "[t]he Association has and will continue to pursue sports betting violations using a layered integrity monitoring program for over 22,000 contests, but we still need more states, regulators and gaming companies to help in this effort by eliminating risky prop bets to reduce opportunities for manipulation."

Baker highlighted steps that the NCAA has taken to police gambling at the college level:

- The NCAA is the only major sports league in the U.S. to prohibit any commercial partnerships with sports books.
- The enforcement staff has opened investigations into potential sports betting violations by approximately 30 current or former men's basketball student-athletes. Some of those cases have already been resolved.
- Over 150,000 student athletes have participated in NCAA gambling education through in-person and online training opportunities.
- Through the NCAA's partnership with EPIC Global Solutions, a comprehensive gambling harm and student-athlete protection education program has been made available to all NCAA campuses and conferences with a blend of delivery options including in-person workshops, seminars and on-demand virtual resources.
- The Association has successfully petitioned four states to eliminate prop bets on college athletes (Louisiana, Maryland, Ohio and Vermont). Those states joined pre-existing bans on prop betting in Arizona, Colorado, Massachusetts, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.
    - A prop bet is a wager on a specific outcome related to an individual's performance during a game, rather than on the final score.

Baker's statement reinforced the NCAA's commitment to anti-social media harassment efforts led by the "Draw the Line" campaign aimed at reducing harmful comments and threats made towards student athletes related to their in-game performance. As betting markets increased through legalization trends, the NCAA reported a 12% increase in abusive messages received by student athletes-with more than 740 instances in 2023. The sports most affected were men's basketball and football. In 2024, the NCAA also teamed with Venmo to curb harassment of student athletes by offering a dedicated abuse reporting hotline, best practices guide, account support and user education.

A September 2023 NCAA survey revealed that 27% of campus compliance directors experienced sports betting issues among their athletes or staff, a substantial increase over a similar survey conducted in 2019. The NCAA's policy shift to permitting staff and athletes at the D-II and D-III levels to engage in sports betting is a drastic shift from the NCAA's previous stark opposition to athlete gambling activities. The previous policy aligned with many professional leagues that ban athletes from betting on any athletic competitions.

Marisa Darden, Chair of Benesch's White Collar, Government Investigations & Regulatory Compliance Practice Group, was interviewed on *Forbes Breaking News* to discuss the mafia-linked NBA gambling scandal. View the full interview here.

If your college or university is struggling to navigate the playing field of state regulations versus NCAA policy changes surrounding sports betting, Title IX compliance or NIL, reach out to Benesch's White Collar, Government Investigations & Regulatory Compliance Practice Group for consultation. We look forward to meeting the needs of collegiate sports industry professionals seeking to navigate the world of compliance in an ever-changing landscape.