

A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

CURRENT STATUS OF OFFICIATING – WHAT CONDITION ARE WE IN?



I am sure we all agree that we have been faced with several daunting challenges since March 2020. However, prior to that time, we were already dealing with an extremely difficult situation related to a shortage of officials, across a wide variety of our sports, and across all geographic locations within our section. These circumstances have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and leaves us in an extremely vulnerable position, not only for this school year, but for years to come unless we address what needs to be done immediately. We are experiencing a reality where we have never had so many games moved to make sure we have officials to cover them. The disruptions that has caused and the difficulties related to constantly changing schedules create a myriad of problems for our member schools that need to be solved. Think of it the way that patients are referred to when in the hospital...

- Stable Condition – We have not been here for several years.
- Serious Condition – Where we were prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Critical Condition – Where we have been since we resumed playing sports in March 2021.
- Terminal – Where we will eventually end up unless we do something right now!

We have talked about it long enough, it is now past the time for all of us to take significant action, and it is everybody's responsibility to do their part. Here are roles that we all play and steps that must be taken...

Member Schools – Our member schools can help by identifying potential officials from their student ranks. Recent graduates can get involved as soon as they finish high school and it is up to our Athletic Directors and coaches to initiate a conversation with them, encourage them and refer them to the appropriate official's associations to help get them started. If every member school recruited one new official, that would mean over 500 new officials would join our ranks, and as our younger officials, they would be a foundation for all of us to build upon for the future.

Coaches, Student-Athletes, Parents, Students and Fans – Treat officials the right way, with respect and appreciation for the work that they do. Poor sportsmanship has been cited as the most significant factor in decisions made by officials who have chosen to no longer officiate. We need to make a concerted effort to ensure that we do all we can to provide an environment that supports proper behavior by all our stakeholders. Our member schools are in complete control of this situation and we need to make establishing a positive school culture our highest priority. Be the school officials want to come to and look forward to coming to!

Southern Section Office – Continue to promote our officials recruiting program through our website and social media platforms and provide resources for prospective officials by referring them to the appropriate official's association to initiate contact with them. Also, we worked with the National Association of Sports Officials to develop video messages promoting officiating that are currently running on the



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Bally's Sports Network and the NFHS Network, both television and livestreaming. We are collaborating on a coordinated effort with the CIF State Office who have implemented a similar outreach program through their website and social media platforms. All prospective officials who contact the CIF State Office that are from the Southern Section footprint are sent to our office for us to follow up with and refer to the appropriate official's association in the Southern Section. Since July, 587 prospective officials have been identified and their contact information forwarded to those who will begin the process of putting them to work. Finally, we are actively working with the National Intramural and Recreational Sports Association to implement a program utilizing college students who are currently officiating at the intramural level to transition to high school officiating to further increase our pool of officials.



CIF Southern Section Council – The Official's Fees Committee is actively engaged in the process to prepare a new three-year fees schedule for the 2022-2023, 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school years. The Southern Section Council will see their proposal introduced for first reading at our next scheduled meeting on February 1, 2022. Over the past three fees cycles, a period of 9 years, the total amount of fees increases for officials has been \$11.00, an average of \$1.22 each year. In this present environment, where we need to attract new officials and retain those we have, I believe it will be important that the Officials Fees proposal for the Council to consider includes a significant fee increase for the next three years. The appropriate message needs to be sent that we value our officials and they should be compensated fairly for the work they do. Increased fees alone are not going to make the shortage of officials go away but would certainly encourage new officials to come on board and retain more of those who are currently working.



Officials Associations – Treat new and existing officials the right way, with training, mentoring, support, quality game assignments and opportunities for advancement within their associations. Once someone joins an official's association, they must be given the proper tools to be successful and our current officials are the only ones who can make that happen within their groups.



I am counting on everyone to do what you can to reverse this trend in the other direction. We can no longer discuss the shortage of officials we are currently experiencing; we must implement the action plan referenced above to put us on the path toward stability in the time ahead.

As always, I sincerely thank you for your help and support, it is truly appreciated.

All the best,

Rob Wignol

