

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF  
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NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION  
BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS  
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Chairman Shelby, Senator Sarbanes and other distinguished members of the committee, on behalf of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, thank you for inviting me to testify today to provide the Association's perspectives on collegiate sports wagering. This is a matter of great importance to the more than 1,000 colleges and universities that are members of the NCAA and to the hundreds of thousands of student-athletes who participate in intercollegiate athletics annually. As an individual on the NCAA staff who has spent nearly seven years working daily on this issue, it is a matter of personal and professional importance, as well.

Our message to you today is simple: We are asking you to do what is right for the college game and what is right for the young people who have earned the privilege of participating in those games. We are asking you to take steps to eliminate the opportunity for individuals to place bets on intercollegiate sports contests on the Internet.

I am not here to promise that banning Internet gambling is the total answer to such an insidious problem as gambling on college sports, but it is part of the equation. The NCAA be-

believes that there should be a prohibition on all legal and illegal sports wagering. It is about what is right for student-athletes. It is about what is right for college athletics.

### **NCAA Sports Wagering Policies and Rules**

The NCAA has a clear, direct policy regarding sports gambling. The NCAA's position on sports gambling is this: *The NCAA opposes all forms of legal and illegal sports wagering. Sports wagering has the potential to undermine the integrity of sports contests and jeopardizes the welfare of student-athletes and the intercollegiate athletics community. Sports wagering de-means the competition and competitors alike by a message that is contrary to the purposes and meaning of sport. Sports competition should be appreciated for the inherent benefits related to participation of student-athletes, coaches and institutions in fair contests, not the amount of money wagered on the outcome of the competition. For these reasons, the NCAA membership has adopted specific rules prohibiting athletics department staff members and student-athletes from engaging in gambling activities as they relate to intercollegiate or professional sporting events.*

The NCAA membership has adopted specific legislation prohibiting athletics department staff members, conference office staff and student-athletes from engaging in sports gambling ac-

tivities, which include Internet wagering. It is not permissible to provide information to individuals who are involved in organized gambling activities, or solicit or accept a wager on college or professional athletics. This rule also applies to NCAA national office staff.

In addition, in 2000, the membership imposed stricter sanctions on those who violate our rules. Student-athletes who participate in point-shaving activities or who solicit or accept bets that involve their own institution lose all of their remaining eligibility. Those who are found to have bet or accepted bets on intercollegiate or professional athletics are ineligible for intercollegiate competition for a minimum of one year and lose one season of competition.

We have established other Association policies for activities associated with gambling. The NCAA Division I Men's and Women's Basketball Championships may not be conducted in metropolitan areas with an open legal sports book. For example, there are no men's basketball championship sites in the state of Oregon, where the lottery is based on the outcome of National Football League contests. The NCAA does not permit its committees to meet or conduct formal social activities in casinos. We have also requested our corporate champions not to engage in promotions connected to the outcome of games. For the fourth straight year, we have conducted background checks on game officials who officiate in the Division I Men's and Women's Bas-

ketball Championships to assure they have had no involvement in sports wagering. We do the same for the national office men's basketball staff members; the agent, gambling and amateurism activities staff members; and the members of the Division I Men's and Women's Basketball Committees.

### **NCAA Internet Gambling Studies and Statistics**

While the Internet offers tremendous educational potential, this technology should not be used to circumvent state and federal laws. Accessibility to the Internet is perhaps the greatest reason for concern regarding Internet gambling. Many students have unlimited use of the Internet and most residences are wired for Internet access. In fact, there may be no group in this country who has more readily available access to computers and the Internet than students. For the NCAA, the potential exists for a student-athlete to place a wager via the Internet and then attempt to influence the outcome of the contest while participating on the court or the playing field. Our students, many of whom have access to credit cards, are lured into online gambling by unscrupulous operators. A recent Nellie Mae study revealed that 90 percent of 20 year olds have credit cards, with the average number of four cards and the average debt of \$2,264. The prolif-

eration of Internet gambling is fueling the growth of illegal sports gambling on college campuses across the country.

As an organization, we have committed to conducting national research regarding student-athletes and sports gambling. We recognize that estimates indicate more than \$3 billion will be wagered at 1,800 Internet gambling sites in 2003, with 50 to 70 percent of that total coming from the U.S.

### **NCAA Educational Efforts**

The Association has developed relationships with and made presentations to various law enforcement groups, including the FBI and the United States Attorney General's advisory group, campus security officers, coaches associations and campus student life personnel. This spring we are again reaching hundreds of our Association members through sessions about sports wagering at our annual compliance seminars at three locations across the country.

We use a multitude of tools to educate our student-athletes and coaches with our messages about sports wagering. Among those initiatives are locker room visits with members of the men's and women's Final Four basketball teams, the Frozen Four teams, and the finalists of the College World Series. Our approach is truly grassroots and must be.

It is important to remember that the NCAA is a member of the higher education community. Among our primary functions are those of providing athletics participation opportunities within the framework of higher education and providing protection for student-athletes. We are about education and providing information to our membership that can lead to life-changing experiences, both in the classroom and on the playing field. Our mission as an Association is to build an infrastructure of awareness and support to equip those involved with student-athletes with the tools to educate them about damaging influences, including sports wagering.

We are not an organization poised to infiltrate illegal gambling networks. We are not an organization with the authority or the charge to investigate illegal gambling activities on college campuses or elsewhere. We have and continue to process cases involving sports wagering when they come within the authority of the organization. We have brought attention for more than five years to a problem we would prefer didn't exist, which is there is illegal gambling on college campuses, some involving student-athletes. We support closer scrutiny of illegal wagering throughout society -- this is not isolated to college campuses -- and certainly it should be discussed within the framework of the entire issue.

## **Conclusion**

The NCAA's strategy to attack problems associated with wagering on college sports is multi-focused. We continue to carry the message that sports wagering is an issue for our student-athletes and we have worked diligently to educate them about the problem. But we need assistance. We believe that strong legislation is needed to prohibit gambling over the Internet.

The system of intercollegiate athletics we have is unique to the world. We must do everything we can to protect the rich heritage, tradition and integrity of intercollegiate competition. We need to do what is right for the college game and what is right for our student-athletes and make gambling on college sports illegal everywhere all of the time.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association  
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