



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

NEWS RELEASE

NFHS, Other Sports Leaders to Address Officials Shortage at First NFHS Officials Consortium

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Dana Pappas

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (April 11, 2022) — Leaders from more than 50 sports organizations will descend on Indianapolis April 12-14 to discuss recruitment and retention of officials during the first-ever NFHS Officials Consortium at the Conrad Hotel.

A recent survey of state high school associations indicated that approximately 50,000 individuals have discontinued their service as high school officials since the 2018-19 season – the last full school year unaffected by the pandemic.

“We discovered that everyone was working on the same problem, but there is no strategic collaboration between the entities,” said Dana Pappas, NFHS director of officiating services. “We understand that everybody is reliant upon our pipeline at the high school level. So, we want to work together to replenish and keep that pipeline healthy and figure out ways that we can do the work collectively instead of everyone doing it on their own.”

Leaders attending the Consortium – who come from the youth, high school, collegiate and professional levels of sport – plan to discuss common problems surrounding the recruitment and retention of officials that have resulted in these staggering numbers. They will also collaborate to develop strategies intended to solve the nationwide officiating crisis.

“We believe the ongoing crisis involving the shortage of officials across the country has lasted far too long,” said Dr. Karissa Niehoff, CEO of the NFHS. “By unifying our leaders in sport, we intend to develop a collective strategy that provides an effective, yet timely solution in addressing the decline in officials brought on by the pandemic, and unsportsmanlike behavior by students, coaches, parents and other fans.”

Retired NBA referee Bob Delaney serves as the Consortium’s keynote speaker on Tuesday. Delaney, who officiated his first National Basketball Association (NBA) game in 1987, most recently served as the NBA’s Vice President Director of Officials. His career work includes officiating more than 1,700 regular season games, 200 playoff contests and nine NBA Finals. Delaney also worked the 1998 and 2011 NBA All-Star Games. In 2003, he was awarded the Gold Whistle Award from the National Association of Sports Officials (NASO).

Delaney’s distinguished officiating career followed a highly decorated career as an undercover New Jersey State Trooper. After 35 years, he continues to provide training to federal, state, county and local law enforcement officers and agents throughout the United States, Canada and Europe.

Other speakers at the Consortium include representatives from the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), National Football League (NFL), NASO/Referee Enterprises (REI), Big Ten Conference, Collegiate Officiating Consortium, Officially Human, The Pictor Group, various state associations and national governing bodies for Olympic sports – all of which have expressed an interest in coming together to address the growing shortage of officials.

“In our discussions with these groups, we realize that instead of just talking about the problem, they want to be a part of the solution, which is exciting,” Pappas said. “We want to get all hands on deck instead of everyone trying to do their own thing to accomplish the same goal.”

At the conclusion of the Consortium, a toolkit will be developed by the NFHS for distribution to state associations and organizations wanting to be involved in restoring the health of the officiating pipeline. Throughout May, the NFHS will also host sectional online meetings for officials and other interested parties to learn the strategies of the Consortium and to receive information about the toolkit.

For more information on how to become a high school official, please visit www.HighSchoolOfficials.com.

This press release was written by Cody Porter, manager of media relations at the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS).

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About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and performing arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and performing arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,500 high schools and 12 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7.9 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; offers online publications and services for high school coaches and officials; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, speech and debate coaches, and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org.

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