MONTANA HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATION
2026 ANNUAL MEETING

Monday, January 19, 2026
Helena
Billings, Montana

PROPOSALS

1. Proposal to Amend Membership By-Law -Contest Requirements for Non-Member Schools

Proposal submitted by Lone peak High School

The following amendments are proposed to By-Law, Article I, Section 1.3 Membership on page 7 and subsequently to Article II, Section 1.5 Association Contest on page 10 of the current MHSA Handbook:

- (Article I, Section 1.3) If a member school wishes to invite a non-accredited school or accept an invitation from the school to participate in a two-school contest **or in an individual sport event, provided all attending member schools consent,** this would not be a violation of this section.

- (Article II, Section 1.5) If a member school wishes to invite a non-accredited school or accept an invitation from the school to participate in a two-school contest **or in an individual sport event, provided all attending member schools consent,** this would not be a violation of this section.

Rationale: This amendment would bring consistency to how this rule affects individual sports, which by nature predominantly have more than two teams participating in an event. It would give schools the freedom to choose for themselves to accept or invite participation with schools in other scholastic associations. Local schools should make the decisions about their own participation in order to take advantage of every competitive opportunity for all student athletes in Montana and in so doing, “cooperate with other organizations or individuals interested in or organized for similar or compatible purposes.” (MHSA Articles of Incorporation, Article II.3)

This is a win-win proposition: Schools in favor can engage in competition with non-member schools if they choose. On the flipside, in any case where a member school does not wish to compete alongside a non-member school, or if an event is too full, member schools would have the right to exclude a non-member school.

Specifically in Track and Field there is a need for more meets. The Montana Christian Activities Association has sanctioned Track and Field and is hosting meets in Montana. These would provide more opportunities for schools to find meets for kids.

As is currently the case with two-team contests with a non-member school, this does not have any application or relevance to post season competition, only in season invitational competition.
This amendment would provide practical benefits to student athletes in our state by creating better competitive opportunities for schools in Montana. It would accomplish this by extending an already beneficial exemption to apply consistently to individual sports.

Fiscal Note: N/A

2. Proposal to Amend Dues By-Law - 6 Player Playoff Profit

Proposal submitted by Highwood High School. Highwood School is proposing the deletion of "and Class C six-player" from the "NOTE:" under Article 1, Section 2.3. On behalf of the six-player league we are also proposing the following language:

- Changing "Classes A-B" under Section 2.3 Football: to "Classes A-B-C Six-Player"

Adding the following at the end of the paragraph under Section 2.3 Football:

- In Class C Six-Player, after all approved expenses for the playoff and state championship games within that classification have been satisfied, the reserve pool monies will then be equally divided among all state playoff qualifying teams.

Rationale:
The Class C Six-Player expense model pays only mileage leaving those teams that qualify for the playoffs holding the bag for additional expenses that rarely get covered. In 2023 and 2024, Class C 6-Player turned profits for the first time ever. In response, the classification met at the 2025 Annual Meeting and unanimously supported the notion that any remaining monies following the coverage of allowable expenses go back to the teams that qualify for the playoffs to help them cover a portion of the additional expenses occurred during the playoff season.

Fiscal Note:
The conclusion was to distribute equally among the 16 teams who qualified for the playoffs, not the individual schools, as teams in a co-op can divide input costs into their squads travel. Thus, if a three-team co-operative qualifies for the playoffs, only one school will receive a check and those schools can oversee how it is disbursed to their local districts.

This proposal would change how profits from Class C 6-Player Football are distributed. Rather than all schools in the classification receiving an equal amount, only playoff qualifying teams would receive a distribution of profits

3. Proposal to Amend By-Law for Expedited Hearings to the MHSA Executive Board

The MHSA Executive Board proposes the following amendment to three different areas of the MHSA Handbook:

1 By-Laws, Article I, Section (5) Executive Board on page 9 of the current MHSA Handbook: Amend 5.5
2 By-Laws – Article VII Protests and Appeals; Subsection B: Individuals' Rules Interpretation and Procedure; Section (1) INDIVIDUAL DUE PROCESS - Page 17 of the current MHSA Handbook
3 Rules and Regulations - Section (30)- CONFERENCE CALLS – Page 26 of the current MHSA Handbook

By-Laws - Section (5) EXECUTIVE BOARD –
5.5 Video conferences necessary for the operation of the Montana High School Association shall be conducted in the same manner and with the same restrictions as regular or special meetings. Video conferences will be held only when necessary for immediate action for an interpretation of a rule, for a violation or protest which needs immediate action, or for an appeal on student eligibility. When an expedited hearing is requested prior to the next scheduled meeting, the Executive Board will assess the appellant a ***non-refundable*** ~~$250~~ $***300*** fee to cover expenses~~. If the decision is overturned by the Executive Board, the fee will be reimbursed.~~ The Board may hold video conferences for any of the above items as well as litigation, legislative, and other emergency matters which could affect the operation of the Association.

ARTICLE VII - Protests and Appeals - Subsection B: Individuals' Rules Interpretation and Procedure
Section (1) INDIVIDUAL DUE PROCESS
1.1 If a student is ruled ineligible under Montana High School Association rules the student affected, or his/her parents or guardian, may appeal the decision to the Executive Board of the Montana High School Association by filing with the Montana High School Association, at its office in Helena, Montana, a written notice of appeal. Appeals shall be acted upon by the MHSA Executive Board at any regular or special meeting, including video conferences. When an expedited hearing is requested prior to the next scheduled meeting, the Executive Board will assess the appellant a ***non-refundable*** ~~$250~~ $***300*** fee to cover expenses. ~~If the decision is overturned by the Executive Board, the fee will be reimbursed.~~ The hearing will be conducted by the Executive Board pursuant to the procedure set forth in section three (3) below.

Rules and Regulations - Section (30) VIDEO CONFERENCES
Video conferences necessary for the operation of the Montana High School Association shall be conducted in the same manner and with the same restrictions as regular or special meetings. Video conferences will be held only when necessary for immediate action for an interpretation of a rule, for a violation or protest

which needs immediate action, or for an appeal on student eligibility. When an expedited hearing is requested prior to the next scheduled board meeting, the Executive Board will assess the appellant a ***non-refundable*** $~~250~~ $***300*** fee to cover expenses. ~~If the decision is overturned by the Executive Board, the fee will be reimbursed.~~ The Board may hold video conferences for any of the above items as well as litigation, legislative, and other emergency matters which could affect the operation of the Association.

Rationale:

The Board changed this policy in 2024 and now the Board is proposing amending this policy. If passed the amount for an expedited hearing will increase $50 ($250 to $300) and the fee will now be non-refundable. The MHSA Executive Board has four scheduled Board meetings every year, which are posted throughout the year. If a school, parent or other individual wants to have an expedited hearing for an appeal, this allows them an opportunity. They can also wait for the next meeting scheduled of the MHSA Executive Board at no additional cost.

Fiscal Note:

There is no fiscal impact to the Membership.

4 Proposal to Add Eligibility By-Law to allow for Academic Hardship

Proposed by the MHSA Executive Board.

The following addition is proposed for By-Law, Article II, Section 2 on page 10-11 of the current MHSA Handbook. This would be added as 2.12 to this by-law

Proposal

Academic ***Hardship Rule: A high school student who, because of circumstances beyond his/her control such as broken home conditions, death of parents or guardian, abandonment or other exceptional circumstances, does not pass the required number of credits the previous semester may be declared eligible by the Executive Director provided a member school administrator petition the Executive Director for a waiver of the academic eligibility rule. If the waiver of the academic eligibility rule is approved by the Executive Director under the foregoing circumstances, he/she shall be eligible provided he/she meets all other eligibility requirements. Appeals on Petitions for Waiver of the Academic Rule under the Academic Hardship Rule shall be acted upon by the MHSA Executive Board at any regular or special meeting, including conference phone calls, provided the school or individual requesting, agrees to pay the cost of the call.***

The official MHSA waiver of the academic eligibility rule form must be used.

Rationale - Allowing the Executive Director to approve waivers to the 2.0 semester credit rule (4 Classes) eligibility rule provides needed flexibility in exceptional circumstances beyond a student's control—such as medical issues, family emergencies, or documented hardships. The MHSA will establish clear criteria for any approved waivers, including mandatory bi-weekly grade checks. If a student is failing any class during these checks, they will become immediately ineligible for the remainder of the semester. This process preserves academic integrity while ensuring fairness and consistency across all member schools.

The Executive Board has also seen a significant increase in appeals related to this rule, further reinforcing the need for a structured waiver option.

There is no fiscal impact to the Membership.

5 Proposal to Amend Transfer By-Law for Homeschool or non-public schools

Proposal submitted by Red Lodge High School. Red Lodge would like to propose a change within the homeschool / non-public eligibility rule.

10.1 ~~Any student, including eighth grade students allowed high school participation, who transfers from one member high school, home school, or non-member school to a member high school is ineligible to participate in a varsity Association Contest for half the number of P.I. days in the current school year of the school to which he/she transfers from the date of enrollment (first day he/she attends classes) in the school to which he/she transfer~~. A student and his/her parents or legal guardians must reside in the attendance area of the school in which he/she is enrolled except for a student enrolling in ninth grade for the first time (see Section (12) Record of Transfer.) This rule applies to a student who transfers after twenty (20) days of enrollment or after he/she participates in an athletic contest while enrolled in grades 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12, EXCEPT the following students may be declared eligible:

New 10.1 ***Any student — including eighth graders who are permitted to participate in high school activities — who transfers from one member school, homeschool, or non-member school to another member, homeschool, or non-public school becomes ineligible for varsity competition. The period of ineligibility is equal to half the number of P.I. days in the current school year. This period begins on the student's first day of enrollment and attendance at the new school.*** A student and his/her parents or legal guardians must reside in the attendance area of the school in which he/she is enrolled except for a student enrolling in ninth grade for the first time (see Section (12) Record of Transfer.) This rule applies to a student who transfers after twenty (20) days of enrollment or after he/she participates in an athletic contest while enrolled in grades 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12, EXCEPT the following students may be declared eligible:

Rationale:
Public school students who transfer, without a change of residence, to other member schools are ineligible to participate for a number of P.I. Days. This proposal would require public school students who transfer to a non-public or home school to be ineligible for the same number of P.I. Days as the district of residence. This proposal upholds the academic integrity of MHSA eligibility standards by addressing the growing number of students transferring from member schools to homeschooling after failing courses in an effort to regain eligibility. This would ensure that non-public and public student transfer eligibility is determined in a similar manner.

There is no fiscal impact to the Membership.

6 Proposal to Amend Awards Rule By-Law – Change Requirements

Proposed by the MHSA Executive Board. The following amendments are proposed for By-Law, Article II, Section 15.1 on page 15 of the current MHSA Handbook. This change would ensure that training gear, workout clothing, and disposable items provided to student-athletes will not count as non-monetary compensation going forward

Section (15) AWARD RULE
15.1 A student becomes ineligible from the date of the report of the violation to the MHSA if at any time the student accepts or enters into any agreement for the purpose of later accepting any compensation or thing of value for or in recognition of athletic or activities performance, with the exception of the following. A student participant may not accept monetary compensation (cash) in recognition of activities performance, participation and/or achievement. A student may accept non-monetary compensation or items of value solely in recognition of activities ability, participation and/or achievement if the total value of such non-monetary compensation or items of value, including the actual value of any gift certificates (so long as they

are not convertible to cash), discounts, coupons, etc., does not exceed $500 retail value annually (July 1 – June 30).
NOTE: For the purposes of this rule, "non-monetary compensation or items of value" does not include customary awards of a symbolic nature without resale value such as:

a. ***Training apparel for practice and/or workouts provided by the school. These items include but are not limited to the following: practice shirt, practice shorts, spandex, tights and a pair of socks.***
b. The school's athletic letter, medals, ribbons, certificates, plaques, trophies, and other emblems.
c. The award is purchased and presented by the student's parents or when the award is purchased by the student with money earned or secured through his/her own individual efforts.
d. MHSA Sportsmanship Awards

NOTE: For the purposes of this rule, these items which have been a part of the previous awards rule would be included in the "non-monetary compensation or items of value":

~~a. Training apparel for practice and/or workouts provided by the school. These items include but are not limited to the following: practice shirt, practice shorts, spandex, tights and a pair of socks.~~
b. Schools may provide warm-up shirts (e.g. shooting shirts) to be worn on the court/field before a contest.
c. Fundraising activities such as pop hoop shoots, passing accuracy contests etc.
d. Individual miniature trophies for first and second place MHSA state championship events purchased from the Association's awards provider.

Rationale
The MHSA Exeuctive Board is proposing a change to the awards rule from last year. This would move the following from counting toward the $500 annual non-monetary compensation to not counting in the future if passes:

a.training apparel for practice and/or workouts provided by the school. These items include but are not limited to the following: practice shirt, practice shorts, spandex, tights and a pair of socks. to mirror polices that have been adopted in surrounding states.

The Executive Board believes this was misplaced last year and this "throw away" gear should not count toward an athletes $500 annually.

There is no fiscal impact to the Membership.

7. Proposal to Amend General Penalties By-Laws -Spectators Ejections

Proposed by the MHSA Executive Board. The following amendment is proposed to By-Laws, Article VIII, Section (2) on page 19 and 20 of the current MHSA Handbook: Section 2 - General Penalties, Section 2.8.2:

a. Any attendee ejected by mutual agreement of the Official and Administration from a regular season or MHSA tournament contest will incur a minimum ~~three (3) game/event~~ ***two-week*** suspension from that team's games/events and all other MHSA games/events in the interim at any level of competition.

~~If the ejection occurs with fewer than three (3) games/events remaining in the team's season, the suspension will carry over to the beginning of the school's sports season which immediately follows in which there are games that week~~

If the ejection occurs with fewer than two weeks remaining in the team's season, the suspension will carry over to the start of the next sports season in and will begin/continue with that season's first schedule activity.

Rationale:

The membership approved of this new ejection rule last year. The Executive Board believes that changing the penalty from three games to two weeks will create a more consistent policy for fan ejections statewide. This change is intended to serve as a deterrent and encourage improved sportsmanship among spectators.

There is no fiscal impact to the Membership.