

By Adam Ripple

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In what could be a historic move for the future of high school athletics in the state, the Pennsylvania House moved legislation forward, Wednesday, April 29, that would permit the PIAA to [separate public and private schools](#) for the playoffs in every interscholastic sport.

The vote was 178-23 to pass the bipartisan bill, which was introduced by state Rep. Scott Conklin, D-Centre County.

This passing of House Bill 41 grants the PIAA, which is the governing body of interscholastic sports in the state, to hold separate postseasons and championships for boundary or traditional public schools and non-boundary schools that include private, parochial and charter schools, where anyone can attend these institutions.

The PIAA has balked behind a bill for more than 50 years that it cannot host separate postseasons due to a bill created in 1972. The bill forced the hand of the PIAA to ensure Catholic and public schools compete under the same roof for the postseason.

With the addition of the Philadelphia Catholic League (District 12) ahead of the 2008-09 season, the playing field has simply not been the same since.

Bishop McCort Principal and CFO Tom Smith sent a press release-statement to WTAJ sports reporter Riley Holsinger, where Smith stated, "A critical point often missing from this conversation is that public schools themselves already operate beyond strict geographic boundaries. Across Pennsylvania, any public school district can allow tuition-based enrollment for out-of-district students."

Smith also added, "The bill intentionally and disproportionately impacts private, faith-based schools, creating a separation from public, secular schools that is not based on competitive balance, but on institutional religious affiliation."

Conversely, State Rep. Carl Walker Metzgar, R-Somerset County, posted on Facebook, Wednesday, "Today, I voted in favor of legislation to allow the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) to establish separate playoffs and championships for public and private schools. Private schools have a significant advantage over public schools due to recruiting. We must ensure balance where competing schools are bound to the same set of rules. House Bill 41 now heads to the Senate for consideration."