

HIGH SCHOOL

AHSAA public-private split reader poll: How fans voted on high school sports structure



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Key Points

- A reader poll shows over 82% support separating public and private schools for postseason play or entirely.
 - The Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA) will soon decide on reclassification for the 2026-28 school years.
 - Private schools have formally raised concerns about enrollment multipliers and competitive-balance rules.
 - Alabama lawmakers have also introduced a bill that would limit the AHSAA's authority over public schools.
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As the Alabama High School Athletic Association nears one of its most closely-watched decisions in recent memory, we asked USA TODAY-Alabama Network readers what they think the organization should do about public and private school competition. Thousands of you answered.

In a [poll](#) limited to one vote per reader, or IP address, 44.53% of voters (1,729) supported a full split between public and private school competition. Another 37.75% (1,466) said the AHSAA should keep public and private schools together during the regular season but separate them for postseason play, while 17.72% (688) favored keeping the current system in place.

The [AHSAA](#) is scheduled to meet Friday, Jan. 23, to announce fall sports reclassification for the 2026-27 and 2027-28 school years, a process that [reshapes how schools are grouped](#) for championship competition and how regions are aligned across the state.

This year's meeting has drawn increased attention as the [possibility of a public-private split](#) has been raised, with private school leaders arguing the current structure does not adequately account for differences in resources and enrollment statewide, and others arguing that private schools have an advantage with access to greater resources. Private schools currently compete within the same Class 1A-7A system as public schools.

Private school representatives [formally presented](#) a list of concerns to the AHSAA's Central Board of Control in December, including criticism of the association's 1.35 enrollment multiplier and the competitive-balance formula, which can move teams up in classification based on postseason success. They also urged the AHSAA to reconsider its interpretation of the CHOOSE Act and revisit scheduling restrictions, including a rule that prevents AHSAA schools from playing AISA opponents.

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The discussion has also unfolded alongside growing political pressure. In mid-January, Alabama lawmakers introduced Senate Bill 73, which would place new limits on the AHSAA's authority and require significant changes to athletic association governance for public school membership.

With reclassification approaching and the debate not slowing down as uncertainty looms, Friday's meeting is expected to bring clarity to how Alabama high school athletics will be organized in the years ahead.

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