

## HIGH SCHOOL

# What you need to know before AHSAA meeting with possible public-private split



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The Alabama High School Athletic Association is scheduled to meet Friday, Jan. 23, to announce reclassification of fall sports for the 2026-27 and 2027-28 school years, decisions that typically reset the competitive map for schools [across the state](#) every two years.

This year, however, the meeting arrives with more attention than usual.

In recent months, private school leaders have [pushed back](#) on AHSAA policies they say disproportionately affect independent programs, while simultaneously the possibility of a [public-private split](#) within the organization has been raised. Also, state lawmakers have [introduced legislation](#) that could dramatically limit the AHSAA's authority and force major structural changes.

Here's everything you need to know heading into Friday's meeting.

## **What happens at AHSAA reclassification meeting?**

Reclassification determines how schools are grouped into classes for championship competition and how regions and areas are aligned to shape postseason paths. The meeting is expected to produce and announce the classifications that will be used for fall sports in the 2026-27 and 2027-28 school years.

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The meeting was originally scheduled for Dec. 15 but was moved to Jan. 23 as tension surrounding the association's structure and policies grew.

## **Why AHSAA public-private split is being discussed and what it could change**

Under a split structure, private schools could be removed from competition against public schools in a sport during championship play or the entire season.

The discussion has escalated in recent months as private school leaders have argued the current system does not fairly account for differences in resources across the state. Private schools currently compete across all classifications from 1A through 7A.

There are fewer than 60 private schools among the AHSAA's roughly 420 member high schools from the 2024 classification process. If private schools were removed from the traditional Class 1A-7A structure and placed into

their own classes, it could shift public school class cutoffs and force changes in regions across the state.

If implemented, the split would be one of the most sweeping changes to the AHSAA competition structure in history.

## **The issues AHSAA private school leaders say need to be addressed**

Representatives from AHSAA member private schools formally presented concerns to the association's Central Board of Control on Dec. 15. Since then, little progress has been made, at least publicly.

Private school leaders criticized the AHSAA's 1.35 enrollment multiplier, which counts each private school student as 1.35 students for classification purposes. They argued it can push smaller programs into higher classes against much larger public schools. As alternatives, they suggested eliminating the multiplier or applying it to all out-of-zone students, regardless of whether they attend public or private schools.

Representatives also pushed for changes to the competitive-balance formula, a system based on that can move schools up a classification based on postseason success and currently applies only to private schools. They asked the AHSAA to apply competitive balance to all schools, adjust the point structure to allow programs to return to their true classification more easily and limit how far teams can be moved above their actual enrollment size.

Private school leaders also urged the AHSAA to reconsider its interpretation of the CHOOSE Act, which has led to eligibility penalties for some transferring students receiving education savings account funds. They argued the policy limits student opportunities and asked the association to remove eligibility restrictions tied to that aid.

Representatives also asked for more scheduling flexibility, including revisiting the rule that prevents AHSAA teams from playing AISA schools. They said it limits non-region options and can increase travel costs.

Lastly, private school leaders requested private school representation on the AHSAA Central Board of Control, saying it would promote more balanced governance and help improve transparency among the branches of schools.

## **The political pressure building around the AHSAA**

In mid-January, Alabama lawmakers introduced Senate Bill 73, a proposal that would severely limit the powers of the AHSAA and reshape how public schools are allowed to participate in athletic associations.

If passed into law, the bill would bar public K-12 schools in Alabama from membership in an athletic association unless the association's board includes at least 50% of members appointed by the governor, speaker of the House of Representatives, president pro tempore of the Senate or the lieutenant governor. The bill would also require that at least 15 members of the board would need to be appointed by government officials.

The bill includes language which states a public school cannot be a member of an association whose student-athlete eligibility regulations conflict with the Alabama Administrative Procedure Act. If the bill passes, it would go into effect Oct. 1, 2026.

Senate Bill 73 is the latest challenge brought by Alabama government officials against the AHSAA. Gov. Kay Ivey and Speaker of the House Nathaniel Ledbetter are currently suing the association over its interpretation of the CHOOSE Act.

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