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Oregon Senate Stands Up for College Athletes

SALEM, Ore. – Today, the Oregon Senate passed Senate Bill 5, which would allow college athletes at Oregon’s public and private universities to receive compensation for use of their name, image, and likeness. The bill, sponsored by Senate President Peter Courtney and Senator James Manning, Jr., was crafted with input from Oregon college athletes and universities.

“This isn’t just a bill... This is a movement,” said Senate President Peter Courtney (D-Salem). “Our college athletes have not been treated fairly. They sacrifice their bodies week after week but don’t even earn enough to send their mother a birthday present. Meanwhile, the NCAA and universities make millions off the names, images, and likenesses of their athletes. This bill is about giving back to our athletes what is rightfully theirs.”

“College sports is a billion-dollar industry. Our players deserve their fair share,” said Senator James Manning, Jr. (D-Eugene). “They are promised a ‘free’ education, but there’s nothing free about it. They pay for it by pouring their blood, sweat, and tears onto the field. It’s also an economic fairness issue. The NCAA and universities are profiting off our athletes, many of whom are Black and from low-income households, and preventing them from making any money for themselves. We have an opportunity to really make a difference in the lives of our college athletes.”

Under the bill, college athletes would be given the right to sign contracts that provide compensation for use of their name, image, and likeness, including through endorsement deals and appearance fees. The bill would also allow college athletes to retain professional representation, increasing fairness during contract negotiations.

“I have been extremely honored to work hands-on with Senator Courtney’s office throughout the entire process of crafting SB 5,” said Jaydon Grant, a captain of the Oregon State University football team. “This bill will change college athletics forever in the state of Oregon by helping college athletes attain economic freedoms. We are all extremely fortunate to have Senators like Senator Courtney and Senator Manning that genuinely care about student-athletes and our well-being outside of our respective competitions!”

As originally drafted, the bill would have required universities and athletic organizations that receive royalties under a merchandising agreement to pay royalties to each member of the team covered by the agreement. The provision was unique in the United States and would have allowed all athletes on a college team to benefit, not just the star athletes. The NCAA told the sponsors of the bill that Oregon’s college athletes would be considered employees and thus ineligible to participate in NCAA sports unless this provision was removed. To avoid risking the NCAA eligibility of Oregon’s college athletes, the royalty requirement was removed from the bill.

The bill passed the Senate with a 23-6 vote and now heads to the House. If passed, Oregon would join several other states in allowing college athletes to earn compensation beginning July 1, 2021.

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