

Gene Smith Issues Support For Bipartisan Bill To Create Federal Standard For Name, Image And Likeness



Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith is backing a bipartisan bill introduced Wednesday that looks to create a federal standard for name, image and likeness in college athletics.

The bill - also known as the Student Athlete Level Playing Field Act - was introduced this week by Ohio Representatives Mike Carey and Greg Landsman, though it was originally introduced in April 2021 by former Rep. Anthony Gonzalez, who played at Ohio State. According to a press release, the legislation hopes to "create an even playing field" for NIL given that states have differing laws surrounding NIL.

"The Student Athlete Level Playing Field Act will establish one federal standard for NIL, protect the college recruiting process, and bring transparency to the NIL landscape," Carey said. "Conflicting NIL rules at the state level created an uneven playing field for universities and student-athletes. Through this legislation, we will grant student athletes the right to capitalize off their own name, image, likeness, while preserving the integrity of college sports for current and future college athletes."

The bill would establish the Covered Athletic Organization Commission, which would make recommendations to Congress on rules surrounding NIL. The 13-member commission would be made up of athletic directors, administrators, coaches, former athletes and sports marketing professionals appointed by leaders in Congress.

As part of Carey and Landsman's updates to Gonzalez' original bill, it would require NIL deals worth over \$500 to be overseen by a Federal Trade Commission clearinghouse. Other notable aspects of the bill include prohibiting universities from restricting student-athletes' abilities to participate in NIL deals, continuing to prohibit inducements in recruiting, and ensuring that student-athletes are not considered employees by universities.

"I'm pleased that student-athletes now have the opportunity to benefit from their name, image and likeness," Smith said in a statement. "At Ohio State, our NIL programming assists student-athletes as they capitalize on their hard work, generate income for necessary expenses, and learn marketing and financial literacy skills. However, NIL laws and regulations remain inconsistent from state to state.

“Representative Carey’s work to bring forth consistent, national NIL regulations will further protect student athletes and bring order to NIL policies and procedures nationwide,” Smith continued. “On behalf of Ohio State, I want to thank Representative Carey for this significant and important legislation.”