



NAACP

August 4, 2026

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Democratic Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

VIA EMAIL

Re: NAACP Opposition to S. 4668, the Protect College Sports Act of 2026

Dear Majority Leader Thune and Democratic Leader Schumer:

I write to express the NAACP's opposition to S. 4668, the Protect College Sports Act of 2026, and to urge the Senate not to advance this legislation.

The Protect College Sports Act is not simply an NIL bill. Public institutions cannot depend upon Black athletes to fill their stadiums, secure television contracts, attract donations, and build nationally recognized brands, then claim neutrality when the political rights of those athletes, their families, and their communities are under attack.

Over the past decade, schools in the Atlantic Coast Conference, Southeastern Conference, and Big 12 have generated approximately \$16 billion in athletic revenue, excluding NIL activity. Black men make up an average of approximately 66 percent of their football rosters. Yet the representation of Black athletes on the field bears little resemblance to the representation of Black students across many of these campuses. At a time when Black male college enrollment has fallen to levels not seen in decades, major universities continue to recruit Black men most aggressively when their physical talent can generate revenue.

That contradiction is at the center of the NAACP's "Out of Bounds" campaign. Our campaign asks families to make informed decisions about the institutions seeking to benefit from their talent. Those decisions should consider not only playing time, facilities, compensation, and professional opportunity, but also whether the school, conference, and state respect the political rights, economic interests, and long-term well-being of the communities from which those athletes come.

Our message is straightforward: No Representation. No Recruitment. No Revenue.

The responsibility for correcting this system rests with institutions and policymakers. This is basic accountability. Any state that works to erase a Black congressional district cannot expect to celebrate a Black athlete's touchdown on Saturday without being held accountable for suppressing that athlete's community during the rest of the week.

Public universities and athletic conferences are not powerless bystanders. They are among the most influential economic and political institutions in their states. When their revenues, competitive positions, or legal exposure are at issue, these institutions have no difficulty finding their voices. Yet, when Black communities ask those same institutions to oppose racially discriminatory maps and the dilution of Black voting strength, too many retreat behind claims of institutional neutrality. Silence under those circumstances is not neutrality. It is a decision to devalue Black participation while profiting from Black talent.

That arrangement is a modern version of Jim Crow. It is an ultimate irony that many of the states attacking Black voting rights also receive more in federal outlays (and dollars from Black taxpayers) than they contribute to federal revenue. Black taxpayers are therefore subsidizing the states, institutions, and athletic systems that work to diminish their political power. That is unacceptable.

Congress should not grant new federal benefits, legal protections, or economic advantages to public institutions and athletic conferences that profit from the talent and labor of Black college athletes while remaining silent as their states dilute Black voting power.

Substantively, the amended legislation remains problematic because its framework confers consequential legal and economic benefits on institutions that already exercise enormous power.

We recognize that the bill contains provisions concerning scholarships, health care, athlete agents, safety standards, and student athlete representation. College athletes deserve those protections. They should not, however, be used as political cover for provisions that insulate institutions and conferences from legal and economic accountability. Congress can protect athletes directly without simultaneously rewarding the institutions that have profited from an inequitable system.

Institutions should not receive additional federal insulation through antitrust protection, federal preemption, expanded media bargaining authority, or limits on legal liability. States and institutions cannot invoke fiscal responsibility while relying upon federal taxpayers, institutional subsidies, and the revenue generated by Black athletes, then ask Congress to protect that arrangement from meaningful accountability.

Senators who have defended voting rights must not surrender their leverage merely to complete a college sports agreement before the November elections. Voting is a foundational right of citizenship. Elected officials have responsibility for upholding this right.

The Senate should reject S. 4668. At a minimum, the Senate should not schedule the legislation for floor consideration, invoke cloture, or attempt to advance it by unanimous consent. Necessary protections for college athletes should instead be considered separately and on their own merits, without granting extraordinary federal privileges to institutions and conferences that refuse to defend the fundamental rights of the Black communities upon which their athletic success depends.

College sports cannot be separated from the economic, civic, and political conditions surrounding the athletes who make the enterprise possible. Public institutions should not profit from Black power on the field while accepting the destruction of Black power at the ballot box.

No Representation. No Recruitment. No Revenue. And no federal reward for institutions that profit from Black athletes while standing by as Black votes are erased.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Johnson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Derrick Johnson
President and CEO
NAACP