

# CLIENT ALERTS

## President Trump Issues Executive Order to Rein in College Sports Chaos and Protect Non-Revenue Programs

### Client Alert

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Tariffs are not the only thing on President Trump's mind these days. Yesterday, Thursday, July 24, the President signed an executive order aimed at stabilizing the rapidly evolving landscape of college athletics. The Order seeks to restore balance in a system he described as "out-of-control" and "rudderless," by curbing pay-for-play practices, safeguarding non-revenue sports, and preserving opportunities for student-athletes.

The executive action comes in response to mounting concerns over the future of college sports following court rulings and deregulation that have dismantled long-standing National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) guardrails. These changes have allowed athletes to monetize their name, image, and likeness (NIL), enabled, if not encouraged, frequent team transfers, and opened the door to multimillion-dollar bidding wars between universities and donors over student-athletes...in some sports.

"This chaos is threatening to destroy what makes college sports special," the order states, warning that the arms race for top talent is draining resources from non-revenue sports, including many women's programs. President Trump emphasized the critical role these sports play in shaping leaders, driving Olympic success, and fueling educational and professional outcomes for hundreds of thousands of athletes.

Among the key directives:

- Expansion of Non-Revenue Sports: Colleges with athletic department revenues exceeding \$125 million must expand scholarships and maximize roster spots for non-revenue sports in the 2025–2026 season. Smaller revenue departments are likewise to maintain current opportunities or

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at least not limit opportunities for non-revenue sports.

- **Ban on Third-Party Pay-for-Play Deals:** Universities are directed to prohibit payments from outside entities that are not tied to legitimate services like brand endorsements.
- **Federal Enforcement and Oversight:** The Departments of Education, Justice, and Health and Human Services, along with the Federal Trade Commission, are tasked with developing regulatory and legal strategies within 30 days to enforce these policies, including potential Title IX and antitrust interventions.
- **Labor Clarification:** The Secretary of Labor and National Labor Relations Board will determine the employment status of college athletes, aiming to preserve the educational mission of collegiate sports.
- **Olympic Pipeline Protection:** White House officials are ordered to collaborate with the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee to maintain the critical role college sports play in developing elite international competitors.

President Trump declared that his administration “will take action accordingly” to ensure college sports remain a student-centered enterprise, not a de facto professional league. “College sports are not, and should not be, professional sports,” the order reads.

This move marks a significant federal intervention in college athletics, signaling a new era of government involvement as the NCAA, universities, and states grapple with how to adapt to the new age of athlete compensation and mobility.

Please contact our Sports and Entertainment Law Team, the authors of this Client Alert, or your Butzel attorney with any questions or for additional information.

**Mitchell Zajac**

313.225.7059

[zajac@butzel.com](mailto:zajac@butzel.com)

**Zachary Revoldt**

313.983.7485

[revoldt@butzel.com](mailto:revoldt@butzel.com)

**Aaron Davis**

517.372.4395

[davisa@butzel.com](mailto:davisa@butzel.com)