

# Rep. Beiser introduces bill requiring criminal background checks for high school sports officials

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*Lawmaker Seeks to Close Loophole Exposed in Local Case*

**WOOD RIVER** — Continuing his efforts to keep our children safe, state Rep. Dan Beiser, D-Alton, is filing legislation that will require sports officials, such as referees and umpires, hired by the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) to undergo a background check before being allowed to oversee athletic events. The legislation comes after a sex offender was found to be officiating sporting events in the Metro-East.



“We require teachers, support staff and parents to submit to background checks before they come into our schools and work with our children. This should be no different for the men and women who officiate at sporting events, and I am hopeful this bill will receive bipartisan support to ensure the sporting events so many students participating in are safe from sexual predators,” said Beiser.

Beiser is drafting the legislation after learning a sex offender has been officiating basketball and baseball games in the Smithton School District for over a year. The IHSA official was able to be in close proximity to students because the association does not require game officials to undergo background checks. Instead, applicants are asked to self-report upon seeking employment. The IHSA has said they were looking into requiring background checks for their officials, but have they no immediate plans to implement a new process for applications.

Beiser’s bill requires the IHSA to conduct background checks on everyone who applies to be an umpire or referee at high school sporting events. The proposal bans the organization from hiring anyone who is required to register as a sex offender or violent offender against youth.

“As a parent, grandparent and former teacher, I understand the lengths that parents go to protect their children,” Beiser said. “I am not willing to wait for the IHSA to put background checks in place for officials at sporting events. This must be done immediately to protect children across the state.”