



EDUCATION

Movement on bill for religious expression on sports uniforms

By Ty Tagami

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Legislation that allows high school athletes to put religious expressions on their uniforms in certain circumstances is moving quickly through the Georgia General Assembly after a vote of approval in a House committee Wednesday.

Senate Bill 309 passed out of the House Education committee and must get through House Rules before it reaches the floor for a vote. The Senate already approved it 39-16 last month, and a bill with nearly identical language, House Bill 870, has already passed the House and is awaiting a hearing in the Senate.

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Both bills ban state-funded high schools from participating in an athletic association that prohibits “religious expression on the clothing of student athletes” or forbids member schools from competing with non-member schools.

The legislation is aimed at the Georgia High School Association, which says it is changing its policy to allow inter-association competition and says religious expression on uniforms is banned as part of a broader prohibition on personal expression.

Sen. Burt Jones, R-Jackson, wasn’t available to present his bill, so Rep. Brian Strickland, R-McDonough, the author of the companion HB 870, did it for him. He told the House Education committee what he has told them before about his own bill, that the legislation allows religious expression on uniforms only in those cases where personal expression is allowed by the rules. He said that as far as he knows the GHSA follows national organization rules that prohibit personal expression.

The bills just say “they can’t pick and choose” when they do permit personal expression, he said.

[Read more about the bills here.](#)



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About the Author



Ty Tagami



Ty Tagami is a staff writer for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Since joining the newspaper in 2002, he has written about everything from hurricanes to homelessness. He has deep experience covering local government and education, and can often be found under the Gold Dome when lawmakers meet or in a school somewhere in the state.

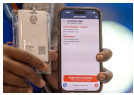
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