



EDUCATION

# Bills on religion and athlete uniforms move through General Assembly

By Ty Tagami

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If high school athletes ever get to personalize their uniforms in Georgia, then they'll be able to include their religious views, under legislation that passed through the state House Wednesday.

House Bill 870 passed 136-25 on a floor vote as Senate Bill 309, said to be identical, passed out of the Senate Education and Youth Committee.

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Rep. Brian Strickland, R-McDonough, the lead co-sponsor of HB 870, said the legislation was aimed at the possibility of discrimination. If the Georgia High School Association, the private organization that oversees athletic competition for most public high schools and some private ones, ever undoes its ban on individual expression on team uniforms, he said, the bill would prohibit discrimination against the religious kind.

Glenn White, president of the Association, said his group worried that some would misread the legislation to allow religious expression on uniforms regardless of the ban on individual expression, which could create confusion.

The bill bans public high schools from participation in athletic events under “any athletic association which prohibits religious expression of student athletes other than as required to protect the safety of the participants or the conduct of the athletic event in a manner consistent with the rules of the particular athletic event.”

It also bans them from belonging to an association that doesn’t allow its members to scrimmage with non-members.

White said the Association is trying to address that issue with a rule change in the spring that would allow inter-association play.



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But Strickland said he wanted a guarantee written into law.

## 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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