

House v. NCAA: Could a New Court Motion Make the \$20.5M Cap Irrelevant?

Article
Lowndes
04.22.2026

A new court motion in *House v. NCAA* could significantly reshape the future of college sports by weakening one of the main enforcement mechanisms tied to the landmark settlement. While the original agreement drew attention for its \$2.8 billion back-pay award and its authorization for schools to share up to \$20.5 million annually with athletes, the latest dispute centers on a narrower but important question: should certain outside payments even count toward those limits?

Specifically, plaintiffs are asking a judge to rule that multimedia rights partners, such as Learfield Sports and PlayFly, should not be treated as entities subject to oversight by the College Sports Commission.

Why Multimedia Rights Companies Matter

Multimedia rights companies have quietly become a potential pathway for schools to compensate athletes beyond the formal revenue-sharing cap. Under the current system, if a school uses part of its allowed pool to pay a player, any related outside deal may still be reviewed by the Commission if it is considered connected to the institution. This motion would remove multimedia partners from that framework, making it easier for athletes to receive additional money through separate agreements tied to those companies.

What Happens If the Court Grants the Motion

The practical effect could be enormous. Wealthier programs with stronger media relationships would likely gain even more flexibility to attract and retain top athletes. A school could remain technically within the official cap while its athletes receive millions more through deals arranged with multimedia partners. On paper, the cap would still exist, but its real-world impact could be sharply reduced.

Related Attorneys

[Adam R. Lewis](#)
[Shane A. Horton](#)

Related Expertise

[Sports & Entertainment](#)

A Familiar Pattern in the NIL Era

The motion also reflects a broader problem that has defined the NIL era from the beginning: efforts to regulate athlete compensation have struggled to keep pace with the market. Schools and collectives have already found ways to stay competitive despite nominal spending restrictions, and this latest filing suggests that multimedia agreements may become one of the most important fronts in that battle. If these deals are exempted from oversight, enforcement of the settlement could become much more difficult.

What This Really Means for College Sports

Ultimately, the multimedia motion may prove more consequential than the settlement's original spending framework. Instead of simply debating how schools divide \$20.5 million among their athletes, college athletics could be headed toward a system where outside media-related compensation drives roster spending far beyond that figure. If that happens, the result would be a much more aggressive financial arms race, with the richest and most connected programs positioned to benefit the most.

How We Can Help

Our firm continues to monitor developments in college athletics and offers support for those navigating changes related to college athletics. We assist student-athletes, families, coaches, and institutions in understanding the legal considerations involved. If you have questions or would like to discuss how these changes might affect you or your organization, please contact the Lowndes Sports & Entertainment team.