

Texas Upholds Christian Athlete Competition Ban

✖ Discrimination against Christian athletes? That's what it looks like in Texas these days—and Pastor John Hagee, among others, is speaking out about it.

The Texas Senate voted to allow private schools parochial schools to compete in University Interscholastic League academic and sports competitions, with the exception of basketball and football. But the law won't pass in 2011 because the legislative session ended on Tuesday without a vote in the House.

Sen. Dan Patrick, R-Houston, authored Bill 1214 to allow equal opportunity for Christian students to participate in all activities. He agreed to an amendment by Sen. Kel Seliger, R-Amarillo, in order to get the legislation through the Senate in the Spring for a House vote in the 2011 session.

"I have long believed that allowing private schools to participate in UIL competition is an issue of fairness, especially for some rural schools that have to travel great distances to compete," Patrick told *Charisma News*. "In my view, it is flat-out discrimination against the parents and their children who choose an alternative to public school."

The bill was supposed to go for a vote in the Texas House of Representatives, but legislators did not take a vote. Now, the legislature will not address the issue again until its next session in 2013. That leaves private and parochial schools unable to compete with their public school counterparts.

Hagee, senior pastor of Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, fought to try to get the law changed so Christian school students can compete with state-funded schools. Only Texas and California prohibit such competition.

As Hagee sees it, some in the Texas public school system do not want the competition from Christian school kids because “then the public could see what a pathetic job they are doing” and will ask why “Christian schools can educate better at a fraction of the cost.”

Indeed, the Texas High School Coaches Association and the UIL, the governing body of extra-curricular programs for the state’s 1,300 public schools, have vehemently opposed the bill for years. This is the third straight year the legislation has failed to pass—but Hagee and Patrick will take up the cause again in 2013.

“In the ‘60s, the scandal in sports was about allowing African-American players to compete. Then it was Title IX; heaven forbid we have to provide a team for all women. And now, heaven forbid we have to allow students to compete who are in private or Christian schools,” Patrick says.

“These parents are paying the full freight on property taxes ... and they’re actually doing Texas a favor by not making taxpayers pay for their schoolchildren’s education. Allowing private schoolchildren to participate in UIL competition will raise the bar for everyone and benefit the entire state.”

Steve Strang contributed to this report.