
Office of the Commissioner
MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL



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Kansas Legislature, Senate Federal & State Affairs Committee
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My name is Bryan Seeley, and my work at Major League Baseball focuses on investigating and combating threats to the integrity of the game. One of these threats comes from sports betting. I appreciate the opportunity to share Major League Baseball’s views on the many important regulations and consumer protections that are essential to a legal sports betting framework. Senate Bill 23, currently before the committee, is a strong and effective piece of legislation and we support its passage.

The House Federal and State Committee has already spent significant time studying sports betting. We support HB 2068, which the full Federal and State Affairs Committee heard on January 30, and we also agree with the House sports betting subcommittee’s recommendation that official league data be required for any bets that take place during the course of athletic competition. We hope to continue working with the Senate committee and stakeholders to create legislation like SB 23 that will make Kansas a leader in responsible and effective sports betting regulation.

Major League Baseball has an obligation to our fans and our sport to ensure any sports betting law does not damage our game. To manage the significant integrity risks posed by legalized sports betting, states must enact comprehensive regulations requiring airtight coordination and partnership between the state, the casino operators and the sports leagues to closely monitor wagers and enforce regulations to prevent potential manipulation. I am going to detail some of the areas of concern, and how they can be comprehensively addressed through policy. I would note that each of these provisions is currently included in Senate Bill 23, which was referred to this committee on January 18, 2019.

Today, in-game bets are the fastest-growing form of sports wagers. Imagine some operators marking a batted ball as a hit and others scoring it as an error, followed by a cascading series of bets reliant on that original subjective outcome. Two people placing the exact same bet with different bookmakers could receive different outcomes, simply based on which data the bookmaker is using to settle in-game wagers. The only way to ensure uniformity, fairness and accuracy of outcomes is to require – by statute – that all sports betting operators use the official and indisputable data and statistics provided by sports leagues like Major League Baseball for scoring any in-game or similarly complex “tier two” bets. SB 23 contains such a requirement, and we believe any proposal considered by the committee must contain

this essential provision. The House sports betting subcommittee studied this issue exhaustively, and concluded that official league data is essential to protect the integrity of sports betting in Kansas.

Our ability to protect our sport from undue influence and manipulation is only as good as the quality of information we receive. One of the primary benefits of a regulated sports betting industry would be increased transparency into what is currently a black box – the betting data in the illegal market. This would provide access to billions of points of data, which could be aggregated, analyzed and acted upon in real time to protect games from outside influences. To ensure this data is available to be put to proper use, SB 23 requires operators to quickly share data with sports leagues, cooperate with league investigations, and report abnormal betting activity.

Certain types of betting pose greater integrity risks than others. For example, bets on the outcome of a single, controllable act – a bet on who commits the first foul in a basketball game or if the first pitch of an inning is a ball or a strike – are more susceptible to outside influence. The sports leagues know what types of betting impose the greatest integrity risks; therefore we must be able to work with regulators to opt out of the forms of betting that are problematic.

Major League Baseball also supports the additional consumer protections in SB 23, which include age restrictions, reasonable advertising restrictions such as prohibitions against advertising geared towards minors, and self-exclusion programs for problem gamblers.

Lastly, sports betting must be mobile. Without legal online products, the illegal market will remain nearly as strong as it is today, as many consumers will simply continue to place their bets instantly, and illegally, on their phones as opposed to traveling to a casino. Legal sports betting must be a modern product, which means mobile options, otherwise it will completely defeat a fundamental purpose of legalization. On this front, SB 23 is an effective and forward-thinking bill.

SB 23 and HB 2068 contain many firm regulations that meet the high standard necessary for an effective sports betting law, and we encourage the committee to adopt a substantially similar approach in any bill that advances from this body. We also support the position reached by the House sports betting subcommittee's finding that official league data is necessary to protect sports integrity and will benefit Kansas consumers. We look forward to working with the committee members and stakeholders to perfect a bill that will make Kansas a leading example of responsible sports betting regulation in the country.