



Snohomish County

County Council

Sam Low
District 5

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Urgent Need for Youth Sports Officials in Snohomish County

On Wednesday, September 28th, 2022, the Snohomish County Council will consider passing a resolution recognizing the urgent need for youth sports officials in Snohomish County, as well as calling for all parents, coaches, and athletes to display sportsmanship both on and off the field.

Washington Officials Association (WOA) officiating numbers have been on the decline for many years. Reasons include an aging workforce, COVID, and most notably the toxic nature of the climate of today's youth sports. It is of vital importance that all coaches, athletes, and parents display good sportsmanship, respect referees, and recognize that it is more important for kids to leave the playing field having learned important life lessons about integrity, dedication, and teamwork, than it is to enjoy a win.

"I brought this resolution forward because clearly this is an issue people need to know about," said Snohomish County Councilmember Sam Low. "I hope by bringing awareness to the critical role officials play in youth sports, other counties around the state will join Snohomish County in helping recruit people to this worthwhile profession and also call upon the public to work together to show our youth what sportsmanship should look like."

According to a 2017 survey conducted by the National Association of Sports Officials (NASO), the vast majority of youth sports officials began due to their love of the game, but 87 percent of the roughly 17,000 officials who were surveyed said they suffered verbal abuse in their role as officials. Thirteen percent said they had been physically assaulted before, during, or after a game.

"I have coached high school level athletes for over a decade. Working with thousands of athletes, their families, and the staff has been an honor," stated Michael Bumpus, Sports Analyst with Seattle Sports Radio, Seahawks and PAC-12 Network, CEO of Elite Training Academy. "Over the years I have witnessed firsthand the integral role referees play in youth sports. While often a thankless job, refs sign up, show up, and therefore ensure, youth athletic competitions are made available for all

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student athletes. It is my hope that we begin to look for ways to come together as a community, dig deep, and move forward in this work so that we can continue to make athletics available for all. The call from County Councilman Low for a resolution recognizing the need for youth sports officials is a big step in the right direction. “

“On behalf of the Washington Officials Association, I would like to thank the Snohomish County Council for their resolution of support for youth officials in the county,” added Dean Corcoran WOA Executive Board President. “Officials are vital to the continuing availability of athletic contests for kids of all ages. We are at a critical stage where games and matches are being canceled due to the lack of officials. I hope that this resolution will raise awareness of the issue to the broader community and be the start of a coordinated effort to recruit and retain officials through improved sportsmanship.”

Recognition is in dire need for youth sports officials and a need to call upon parents, coaches and athletes in youth sports to demonstrate a proper perspective on youth sports and to display respect for those doing the difficult job of officiating.

“The adults in the room are charged with exemplifying what good sportsmanship is,” added Jennifer Bumpus, Monroe School Board President. “We are responsible for executing integrity, practicing self-control and being respectful spectators and participants. It is our duty to support athletes, referees and our communities in ensuring that all persons have equitable rights to participation, protection and safety.”

“Thank you to Sam Low and the Snohomish County Council for raising awareness of the challenges youth sports officials are facing in today's environment,” added Jeff Mattson, WOA Executive Board Member – Region 1 Representative. “I hope this resolution sparks ongoing conversations between schools, parents, and officials on ways we can all improve sportsmanship and return officiating to the point where officials are appreciated and respected. Without officials, there are no games.”

Many speakers will show their support on Wednesday at the Snohomish County Council's General Legislative Session. The meeting takes place at 9am at 3000 Rockefeller Ave., Everett, WA 98201 on the 8th floor of the Robert Drewel Building.