

More taxpayer money will go down the drain

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By Art Parker, Editor

Here we go again. Get ready. More of our taxpayer money will surely be going down the drain, again. It's all because some folks cannot behave at high school sporting venues. Usually, it's the players. This time it's the coaches.

Last Friday night after the Walker-Cullman game, coaches decided to have a fight in full view of fans and, unfortunately, their own players. From all reports it appears that the players took the high road and didn't lower themselves into the pit of indignation by participating in the brawl.

That's good news for the players. That's bad news for the coaches. It's horrible news for the taxpayers.

After the Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA) investigates and then sends the word down from its lofty, holy perch, the taxpayers will lose more of their money. It's simple. The AHSAA will, in all probability, do what it always does and fine the school(s) because of the incident. That means you and I, once again, pay for the misbehavior of individuals involved in a school sporting event.

We pay for it because all money that goes into a public school is taxpayer money. The AHSAA and some others may want you to believe that fines are paid with money collected at the gate for games, etc. It doesn't make any difference according to the law. Money in the legal

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possession of a public school is taxpayer money. Period.

My beef is that a private corporation should not be able to demand money from a public entity and receive it under these circumstances. The AHSAA is a private corporation and the Alabama Attorney General has recently established that as fact. As I understand it the AG responded to a recent AHSAA inquiry regarding the new gun law and the increased possibility of people bringing guns to high school sporting events. The AG declined to provide the association with an opinion, because technically, the AHSAA is a private corporation.

When I first checked out the AHSAA's practice of fining schools it was after Stanhope Elmore and Robert E. Lee both got popped heavily for a player brawl about five years ago. I believe the fine was \$300 for every player that stepped onto the field during the altercation. Stanhope Elmore was clobbered with over \$3,000 of fines. The school had to pay or it could not play ball in the association. We can buy a lot of supplies for chemistry classes, help pave the parking lot or even pay a teacher for a month with \$3,000.

As I have said before, kids do not learn anything when the school pays fines for their misbehavior. They just know that someone else took care of the problem and they don't worry about it. Do you think the fines that will be paid by the taxpayers in the Walker-Cullman fiasco will teach a lesson to the coaches who cannot behave? If you do I have a piece of ocean side property in Kansas I want to sell you.

No one learns a lesson when someone else pays for their mistakes. If kids can't behave they should not have the privilege to play. A coach, who is receiving taxpayer dollars every month in the form of a salary, should be fired for such actions by his/her employer. Why should the taxpayers pay anything to a private corporation when the matter should be settled between the coach and the board of education that employs him/her?

A month or so ago I read that the AHSAA collected over \$170,000 in fines last school year. I feel sure that most of this money is due to inappropriate behavior such as kids fighting or coaches that are ejected from games. I don't care why these fines are levied; I just know that the taxpayers should not be forced to pay their money to a private corporation under these circumstances.

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Our elected officials are responsible for this practice continuing. They are the ones that can stop it. The answer is simple. Just pass legislation that states our public schools cannot be a member of any associations that fines its members. And when that is done the AHSAA will either change its tune or the schools can form a new association that shows more respect to the taxpayers, and perhaps manages problem kids and problem coaches differently.