

The High School Sports Officials of Western New York

Press Release

The High School Sports Officials of Western New York have been working with Section VI since December 20, 2021, trying to resolve a new officials' contract. The current contract expires August 31, 2022. On Monday August 22, 2022, Section VI rejected the officials' latest offer for monetary compensation. The sticking point lies with Section VI, who is unwilling to increase referees pay in times of inflation even after their pay was frozen for two years.

The cost of living in Western New York (Buffalo area-including Niagara, Erie, Orleans counties plus the Southern Tier) has an inflation rate of 19.4% from 2019 to today. According to the United States Labor Department, the annual inflation rate for the last 12 months ending July 2022 is 8.5%.

Officials spend an average of \$225.00 per year on dues, uniforms, and equipment. Officials also spend a minimum of 8 to 20 hours or more in training/classes to either become an official or remain a certified official.

The officials were asked by Section VI in November of 2020 to take a wage freeze due to the pandemic, the uncertainty of interscholastic sports, and school district's finances. This was done with the understanding officials would be adequately compensated in 2022-2023 because the Sports Officials of Western New York are the lowest paid in New York State. The officials believed the increase would come to fruition when Governor Hochul made Districts whole by restoring Foundation Aid, included in every Districts State Aid Appropriation. That never happened.

Both sides agreed to base pay over the next six years. However, at the last moment, Section VI placed criteria on achieving the next level of base pay for the following year. Officials have never had a condition attached to achieve base pay in previous contracts, and no other Section in New York State requires a criterion to achieve the next year's base pay.

What seems strange is Section VI Executive Director Mark DiFilippo agrees there is an officials' crisis at the high school level and sports officials are not getting paid a lot of money. On April 22, 2022 in an interview with WBEN radio, DiFilippo states, "There is often an abuse of officials in high school sports. It has certainly taken its toll because these officials, **'they're not getting paid a lot of money'** to put up with the aggravation and headaches of people criticizing the decisions that they make."

The officials are outraged at the Section's offer and question whether Section VI truly cares if officials are being fairly compensated. Currently many officials are questioning whether it's worth their time and commitment to continue to officiate their respective sports.

The High School Sports Officials of Western New York Press Release

The sports officials of Western New York want to be on the fields, mats and courts working with student athletes and coaches in the various sports. It's a shame Section VI doesn't feel the same way about their student-athletes. Many officials feel they cannot go on officiating if their compensation increase comes out to less than a gallon of gasoline.