

THE AMERICAN LEGION — DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS

SECOND DIVISION BASEBALL COMMITTEE REPORT

Reporting Officer: Chad B. Miller, Second Division Baseball Committee Chairman

Subject: Department Baseball Committee Meeting — Report to the Second Division

Reporting Period: October 2026

1. STATE OF AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL

The Department Baseball Committee reviewed the continued decline in participation across Illinois, particularly in areas where travel baseball, club programs, and high school athletic commitments compete for players.

The Third Division reported success rebuilding participation through direct partnerships with high school coaches and aligning summer baseball with their existing programs. This approach demonstrates that recruitment and cooperation, rather than competition with established baseball organizations, are critical to the program's survival.

Committee members also discussed creating a statewide baseball association structure while maintaining American Legion oversight. The proposal would strengthen district-level representation, improve recruitment, distribute administrative responsibilities, and preserve existing division identities. Further review and a possible joint resolution from the active divisions were discussed; no final action was taken.

2. SECOND DIVISION — PROJECT HOMETOWN

I presented **Project HOMETOWN**, our Second Division initiative to rebuild American Legion Baseball through partnerships with existing community and club baseball organizations.

Our initial focus will be McHenry and Lake Counties, where established baseball clubs already operate multiple teams but participation in American Legion Baseball remains limited.

The concept is to work directly with club leadership to develop American Legion-sponsored teams using eligible players from their existing programs. This would provide additional playing opportunities, introduce more athletes to American Legion Baseball, and strengthen connections between local Posts, families, and youth organizations.

I have established preliminary communication with a McHenry County baseball liaison who supports exploring the concept. The next step is direct outreach to individual organizations in both counties.

The objective is to establish a workable pilot for the 2027 season, beginning with Post 491, and develop a model that can be expanded throughout the Second Division.

Implementation will require verification of player eligibility, roster requirements, geographic boundaries, and scheduling under national and department rules.

3. RULES, PLAYER SAFETY, AND ELIGIBILITY

The committee reviewed several important rules and enforcement issues:

- **Pitch counts:** National discussions indicated that pitch limits, required rest periods, and pitching appearances may be revised for 2027 following USA Baseball injury-prevention reviews. No final changes were confirmed. Alignment with IHSA standards was recommended for consideration.
- **Pitch-count violations:** Discussion centered on the appropriate penalty when an ineligible pitcher enters a game or exceeds permitted limits. National guidance discussed at the meeting favored removal or ejection of the pitcher and manager rather than automatic team forfeiture. The committee raised concerns about competitive fairness and the need for written clarification.
- **Roster limits:** The 18-player limit following final roster approval was reaffirmed in discussion. Questions concerning larger regular-season player pools, roster changes before lock-in, and insurance coverage require further clarification.
- **Postseason eligibility:** Players participating with outside teams during Legion postseason competition may jeopardize their eligibility. Coaches and division chairmen must verify the applicable restrictions before tournament play.
- **Sponsorship and trademarks:** The committee discussed teams operating without an active sponsoring American Legion Post, including proper sponsorship identification, use of the Legion name, and financial oversight. Additional clarification from National was recommended.

The importance of qualified umpires, accurate pitch-count records, coach education, and consistent statewide enforcement was emphasized.

4. 2027 REGISTRATION, TOURNAMENTS, AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Department Chairman Don reviewed the registration process, deadlines, and tournament preparations.

The May 15 early-registration deadline and associated \$200 late penalty were discussed, particularly their impact on high school coaches still involved in spring competition. The

committee emphasized earlier communication and assistance rather than unnecessary penalties.

The Department Senior Tournament is expected to return to Carol Stream, with July 21–25, 2027, discussed as the likely dates, subject to final confirmation.

The committee also reviewed the national baseball scholarship application deadline of July 15, the need to increase applications, and the availability of division-level scholarship awards. Better communication is necessary so deserving players are not overlooked.

Outstanding reimbursements and delayed scholarship payments were identified as issues requiring resolution.

5. PROGRAM FINANCES AND TOURNAMENT OPERATIONS

Significant attention was given to the rising cost of tournament operations and national postseason travel.

National proposals discussed included changes to transportation arrangements, baggage allowances, future team fees, and a possible \$3,000 assessment per department beginning in 2028. These were discussed as proposed changes, not established Illinois obligations.

Don reported that eliminating the host's responsibility for team lodging at the Department Senior Tournament substantially reduced the financial burden on the host organization. Additional consideration was given to modest host assistance, centralized tournament facilities, and partnerships with colleges or established baseball venues.

The committee also discussed replacing traditional championship trophies with championship flags, potentially reducing expenses while providing a lasting and visible recognition of achievement.

6. ALL-STAR GAMES, RECRUITMENT, AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Don reported a successful Illinois All-Star victory over Missouri and proposed bringing the championship trophy to participating American Legion Posts to recognize their players.

Additional discussions included a possible Illinois–Indiana All-Star competition and continuing the Junior Legion All-Star program. Members emphasized better promotion to college coaches and scouts, particularly junior colleges and Division III programs.

The committee supported maintaining a recruitment presence at the baseball coaches' conference in Chicago in January.

The Department Commander emphasized strengthening the entire Legion Family's participation, including potential SAL and Auxiliary representation, additional volunteers, and improved financial support for youth programs.

Outdated baseball webpages and inconsistent social media reporting were also identified as problems. The committee discussed updating the state rulebook, improving communication of scores and schedules, and establishing shared administrative control of department baseball communications.

7. COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND NEXT STEPS

The Department Commander stressed the importance of active district baseball representatives, clearly defined chairman responsibilities, succession planning, and regular communication between district, division, and department leadership.

The committee discussed conducting a spring follow-up meeting, potentially by Zoom, to address outstanding rules, recruitment, and organizational matters.

Second Division priorities moving forward:

1. Launch Project HOMETOWN outreach in McHenry and Lake Counties and work toward a 2027 pilot.
2. Reengage baseball representatives throughout the 10th, 11th, 12th, and 13th Districts.
3. Verify 2027 eligibility, pitching, roster, insurance, and registration requirements before advising prospective teams.
4. Expand recruitment through high schools, baseball clubs, and community organizations.
5. Support improved committee coordination, financial accountability, scholarship participation, and promotion of American Legion Baseball.

Respectfully submitted,

Chad B. Miller

Second Division Baseball Committee Chairman
The American Legion, Department of Illinois