



Patrick Morrissey
Office of the Governor

April 30, 2025

VIA HAND DELIVERY

The Honorable Kris Warner
Secretary of State
State Capitol Complex
Building 1, Suite 157-K
Charleston, West Virginia 25305

RE: Enrolled Committee Substitute for the Committee Substitute Senate Bill 531

Secretary Warner:

Pursuant to Section Fourteen, Article VII of the Constitution of the State of West Virginia, I hereby disapprove and return Enrolled Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 531. This bill increases the penalties for assault and battery on an athletic official, and expands the subject of this charge to include participants in athletic events.

I find these offenses to be abhorrent. But I cannot justify a crime against a referee carrying a minimum sentence that is double that for assault on a police officer, particularly when only the former is mandatory. I would like to echo the sentiment of the Legislators: The individuals who devote their time to referee and coach our youth sports leagues—often as unpaid volunteers—provide an admirable service to our communities, and they are very much valued. But I cannot sign this bill, as it is currently written, and encourage the bill sponsor to work with my office to craft better legislation.

Accordingly, I hereby disapprove and return Enrolled Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 531.

Sincerely,

Patrick Morrissey
Governor

cc: The Honorable Randy Smith
President of the Senate

Roger Hanshaw
Speaker of the House of Delegates