



January 16, 2020

IHSAA Commissioner Bobby Cox Announces He Will Retire This Summer

Bobby Cox, Commissioner of the Indiana High School Athletic Association, Inc. since 2011, announced to the IHSAA Executive Committee his intention to retire effective August 1, 2020. Cox's announcement came this morning as part of the group's January meeting.

Cox, 63, and who will be completing a 41-year career in education, joined the IHSAA as an assistant commissioner in 2000 and began his tenure as the IHSAA's eighth commissioner on February 1, 2011 succeeding Blake Ress (2000-11). Other former IHSAA commissioners include: Bob Gardner (1995-2000), C. Eugene Cato (1983-1995), Ward E. Brown (1976-1983), Phil N. Eskew (1962-1976), L.V. Phillips (1945-1962) and Arthur L. Trester (1929-1945).

"It has been an honor to serve as Commissioner of this great organization," says Cox. "I will take away fond memories and a sense of accomplishment on behalf of our member schools and thousands of Hoosier students knowing that education-based athletics remains vitally important and relevant in our state."

The Personnel Committee announced that a plan to begin the search for a new commissioner will be developed and presented to the IHSAA Executive Committee at its February meeting.

During Cox's tenure as Commissioner, the IHSAA has made unprecedented advances in numerous areas all with the intention of further strengthening the IHSAA's brand and trumpeting the many values and benefits of participation in education-based athletics.

He oversaw an expansion of corporate partnerships and sponsorships for the Association and pushed for strides in sportsmanship, technology, coaches education, student-athlete health and safety, officiating recruitment and retention, and servant leadership just to name a few.

Perhaps most special to Cox was the Association's embrace of the Champions Together initiative, a partnership with Special Olympics Indiana which established the newest state tournaments in Unified Track and Field (2014) and Unified Flag Football (2018). The two sports allow students with and without intellectual disabilities to compete together in a team setting for their school.

In 2014, he helped finalize a deal with the Indiana Pacers and Indiana Fever to become the presenting sponsors of the boys and girls basketball state tournaments, the first professional basketball franchises in the country to partner with a state high school association.

Cox oversaw the creation and formation of the IHSAA Foundation in 2015 which continues to operate for the charitable benefits of IHSAA member schools and their student-athletes.

That same year, the IHSAA took the unprecedented step of self-producing state championship events along with games of the week in football and basketball using its online streaming platform at IHSAAtv.org. Together with the IHSAA Champions Network, it has grown into one of the most successful high school sports broadcasting aggregates in the United States.

Additionally, he's worked to promote the #FaceOfSportsmanship initiative to address student and adult behaviors, authored the Tournament Success Factor in team sports, and oversaw the move to multiple classes in boys and girls soccer



(2011), and the addition of a sixth class in football (2013). He also orchestrated a total redesign and launch of the IHSAA members and officials website at myIHSAA.org (2018) and a renovation of the IHSAA building in 2011.

“Commissioner Cox has been a tremendous asset to the IHSAA during his service to the association and the State of Indiana,” says Matt Martin, chairman of the IHSAA Executive Committee and athletic director at Knightstown High School. “Under his leadership and guidance, the IHSAA is currently at the forefront of numerous policies due to his knowledge and leadership. When the commissioner retires in August, the IHSAA will be in great standing due to his hard work and dedication. It has been a pleasure to serve as chairman and on the IHSAA Board of Directors under Commissioner Cox.”

Prior to being appointed commissioner, Cox had served as assistant commissioner from 2000-11 administering the sports of football, boys’ golf, boys’ and girls’ track and field, and wrestling.

In addition to leading the IHSAA, Cox has served on several different boards of directors including the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), the IHSAA Foundation, the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame, the Indiana Sports Corporation, the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET), and the Center for Sports Leadership and Innovation. He is also a member of the Board of Directors for the 2022 College Football Playoff Host Committee.

Previously, Cox was a member of the NFHS Football Rules Committee serving as the Chairman of the Research subcommittee from 2008-2011. Additionally, he served as a member of the NFHS Coaches’ Education committee from 2002-06 and as an advisor to the Commission on Sports Medicine of the Indiana State Medical Association.

Before joining the IHSAA, Cox had spent the previous 21 years as a teacher, coach, and athletic administrator in the Carmel Clay Schools. He served as athletics and activities director at Clay Junior High School from 1990-97, and as the athletic director at Carmel High School from 1997-2000. At Carmel High School, his responsibilities included management of 54 athletic teams and 97 coaches who annually served more than 1,100 student athletes. During his tenure as athletic director, he served as the host administrator for numerous IHSAA tournament events, including the cross country and softball state finals.

Professionally, Cox earned the designation of Certified Athletic Administrator by the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association.

He is a 2019 inductee into the Carmel High School Alumni Hall of Fame, where he graduated in 1975 and participated in cross country and track and field. He earned a bachelor’s degree in physical education and health from Butler University in 1979 and a master’s degree in secondary education from Butler in 1987. Cox’s wife, Kathy, is a retired Athletic and Activity Director at Clay Middle School.

BOBBY COX AT A GLANCE

FULL NAME

Robert Michael Cox.

BIRTH

October 24, 1956 in Birmingham, Alabama (63 years old).

EDUCATION

Carmel High School, 1975.

Butler University (B.S., Physical Education and Health), 1979.

Butler University (M.S., Secondary Education), 1987.

FAMILY

Wife: Kathy.

CAREER PATH

Carmel Clay Junior High School, teacher and coach, 1979-90.

Carmel Clay Junior High School, athletics and activities director, 1990-97.

Carmel High School, athletic director, 1997-2000.

Indiana High School Athletic Association, assistant commissioner, 2000-11.

Indiana High School Athletic Association, commissioner, 2011-20.

About the Indiana High School Athletic Association, Inc. (IHSAA)

The IHSAA is a voluntary, not-for-profit organization that is self-supporting without the use of tax monies. Since its founding in 1903, the Association's mission has been to provide wholesome, educational athletics for the secondary schools of Indiana. Its 412 member high schools - public, institutional, parochial and private - pay no annual membership fee or incur entry fees to play in the Association's tournaments. A state tournament series is conducted annually in 22 sports, 10 for girls, 10 for boys and two co-ed (unified flag football and unified track and field). A 19-person board of directors, elected by member school principals, governs the organization.