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PIAA Executive Director Announces Retirement

Dr. Robert Lombardi spent 37 years at the PIAA

MECHANICSBURG, PA – As one of the nation's longest-tenured state association administrators, Dr. Robert Lombardi, has served the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association, Inc. (PIAA) since 1988 and will now head into retirement.

Since joining the PIAA staff in 1988, Dr. Lombardi has been tournament director for most PIAA Championships. He started his career at the PIAA as assistant executive director and, after five years, was promoted to associate executive director. Thereafter, in 2012, he was named the executive director of PIAA and has remained in that position ever since. As executive director, Dr. Lombardi handles Bylaw interpretations, strategic planning, fiscal management, office operations, the PIAA Foundation, and legislative affairs.

"On behalf of the entire PIAA Board of Directors, I want to thank Dr. Lombardi for his outstanding leadership and unwavering commitment to student-athletes and interscholastic athletics", said Frank Majikes, PIAA Board President. "Dr. Lombardi's positive influence on PIAA and his mentorship of countless colleagues has been invaluable. We wish him a joyous and well-deserved retirement."

Dr. Lombardi is recognized as the founding father of the PIAA's Annual Officials Convention, which celebrated its 30th year in 2025. It started with only 75 officials in attendance and has grown to over 1,000 each year. The convention has become the largest interscholastic sports officials' convention in the country! It's a chance for officials to gain educational knowledge and review rule changes for the upcoming sports season(s). The convention caps off by recognizing PIAA officials for their years of service to the high school student-athletes in Pennsylvania. While in the officials' role at the PIAA, Dr. Lombardi's responsibilities included managing the day-to-day duties of the PIAA officials' program and its continuing education component, which has more than 15,000 registered sports officials. His supervisory duties included registration, recruitment, evaluation and assignment of registered sports officials for all PIAA championship events. He coordinated the guides, annual rules bulletins, evaluation instruments, and educational seminars.

Under Dr. Lombardi's leadership, the organization saw tremendous growth, advancing to the fourth (4th) largest state in the nation for interscholastic athletics by way of student athlete participation. The current strengths of the organization can be attributed to Dr. Lombardi's accomplishments and initiatives during his many years of service, which include:

- Expanding classifications in multiple sports: Baseball, Basketball, Cross County, Football, Girls' and Boys' Lacrosse, Girls' and Boys' Soccer, Softball and Girls' Volleyball (starting in the 2026-27 school year).



PENNSYLVANIA INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION, INC.

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- The adoption of three PIAA Sports and increasing the opportunities for female athletes with the additions of Competitive Spirit, Girls' Flag Football, and Girls' Wrestling.
- Integration of Unified Special Olympics Championships, including hosting the Unified Bocce Championships during the PIAA Basketball Championship and Unified Track and Field Championships during the PIAA Track and Field Championships.
- The addition and development of the Ambulatory and Wheelchair standards and adding nine (9) more events to the PIAA Track and Field Championships. Further, two Para-Swimming standards and classifications were added and the opportunity to compete in two para-events during the PIAA Swimming and Diving Championships.
- Sending Pennsylvania student-athletes to the NFHS National Student Leadership Summit, free of charge to all in attendance. All expenses are covered by the PIAA Foundation.
- The development and expansion of the competition formula and transfer rules.
- The establishment of the Fall and Spring Sports Festivals.
- Initiated by Brad Cashman, former PIAA Executive Director, the office staff has expanded from nine (9) to fifteen (15) currently.

During his time with the association, Dr. Lombardi has also held positions nationally. In 2024, Dr. Lombardi became the [65th NFHS President](#), commencing during the 105th NFHS Summer Meeting in Boston, Massachusetts. There have been 66 NFHS presidents, and he's the first from the Keystone State to hold this role. Pennsylvania became a member of the NFHS in 1925.

Prior to becoming president, Dr. Lombardi was voted to the NFHS National Board of Directors in [July 2021](#) and in July 2023, he was voted as the president-elect. He was also chair of the NFHS Officials Education Committee, the Officials Recruitment, Retainment, Training and Evaluation Committee, the Risk Management Committee for Officials, the Coaches and Athletic Administrators Committee, NFHS Soccer Rules Committee and has served a term on the NFHS Basketball Rules Committee.

"Dr. Bob Lombardi has had a most incredible career, said Karissa Niehoff, NFHS Chief Executive Officer. "For decades he has been an educational leader who cares deeply about not just young people, but all people. He served the NFHS in numerous capacities, most recently as President of the NFHS Board of Directors. During his time on the board, and in his role as President, he was a brilliant leader of the national membership and a fierce champion for the work of state associations and schools. He brought wisdom, innovative ideas, thoughtfulness and humor. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with Bob. He is the consummate professional leader and a dear friend. Congratulations Dr. Lombardi!"

In 2006, Dr. Lombardi was the first representative from Pennsylvania to be honored by being named a recipient of an NFHS Citation. The citations are presented to those whose contributions have made an impact, with a longstanding and distinguished record of involvement, with high school activity programs through their state association.



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Before coming to the PIAA in 1988, Dr. Lombardi spent some time at the New Mexico Activities Association, first as an intern then on staff. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in health and physical education from East Stroudsburg University and later received his doctorate in sports administration from the University of New Mexico in 1994. Before joining the PIAA, Dr. Lombardi was a certified PIAA sports official and a teacher and coach in the Wayne Highlands School District, near the area where he grew up. He was featured in a book titled, "Profiles of Sport Industry Professionals, The People Who Make the Games Happen." It was published in 2001.



From left to right: Mark Byers, Chief Operating Officer; Dr. Robert Lombardi, Executive Director; Frank Majikes, PIAA Board of Directors President; Lyndsay Barna, Assistant Executive Director; Jennifer Grassel, Assistant Executive Director; Patrick Gebhart, Associate Executive Director; Keenan Huss, Assistant Executive Director pictured together at the 30th Annual PIAA Officials Convention.

Dr. Lombardi will head for retirement December 31st, 2025. He has been married to his wife, Julie, for 32 years and has two daughters. There will be a press conference on Wednesday, October 15th, 2025. Members of the media received a zoom invitation for a press conference on Friday, October 10th and are encouraged to attend. The PIAA Board of Directors appointed Mark Byers, Chief Operating Officer, as Dr. Lombardi's successor as PIAA Executive Director as of January 1, 2026.

Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association

Beginning in Pittsburgh, on December 29, 1913, PIAA was given the privilege of serving its member schools and registered officials by establishing policies and adopting contest rules that emphasize the educational values of interscholastic athletics, promote safe and sportsmanlike competition, and provide uniform standards for all interscholastic levels of competition.