

Youth Sports Participation – A Winning Strategy



Young children participate in youth sports. Photo courtesy of New Lenox (Illinois) Community Park District.

BENEFITS OF YOUTH SPORTS

When kids play sports, they build confidence, connection and character — skills that carry them from the playground to the classroom and beyond. They also grow up healthier — physically, mentally and emotionally.

PROBLEM

Despite the clear value of youth sports, obstacles continue to prevent all kids from having access to equal opportunities for all to play. **Only 55 percent of kids participate in youth sports.**

SOLUTION

Parks and recreation is the nation's largest local sports network, managing most public sports facilities nationwide. With 92 percent of agencies offering youth sports programs, **local park and recreation agencies reach more than 50 million youths each year.**

50M+

youth reached
annually by local park
& recreation agencies.



55%

of kids participate in youth
sports, making it critical to
invest.

CONGRESS'S ROLE

Launched in 2025 by Representatives Marc Veasy and Jake Ellzey, the **bipartisan Congressional Youth Sports Caucus supports the Healthy People 2030 campaign of increasing youth sports participation rates to 63 percent.** This increase would be a great stride toward NRPA's goal of ensuring all kids have access to high-quality youth sports opportunities.

OUR ASK



→ **Support the STRONG Kids Act.**

→ **Join the Congressional Youth Caucus.**

Contact: JR.Lewis@mail.house.gov (Rep. Ellzey) and
Sequoia.Ragland@mail.house.gov (Rep Veasey).

NRPA and other youth-serving organizations are working to introduce the STRONG Kids Act — legislation that would provide funding for youth sports programs across the United States without cost to taxpayers.

If you are interested in learning more about NRPA's work on youth sports, please email advocacy@nrpa.org



WHAT THE STRONG KIDS ACT DOES:

This legislation would provide funds for a grant program to be administered by the Department of Health and Human Services and derived from the federal excise tax on sports betting. **Fifty percent** of the tax collected would be directed to this new grant program.

Nonprofits and government organizations at the national, state and local level would be eligible for funding.

An estimated **\$200 million** a year would be available to invest in youth sports as a result of this bipartisan legislation. Leader co-sponsors: Representative Mike Carey (R-OH-14) and Nanette Diaz Barragán (D-California-44).



*Young athletes participate in a community youth sports program.
Photo courtesy of the City of Douglasville.*

ELIGIBLE USES OF FUNDS



Reducing family participation and registration costs.



Expanding access to adaptive sports for children with disabilities.



Supporting coach training and upgrading safety practices.



Implementation of policies to protect young athletes from physical or emotional misconduct”.



Acquiring or modifying local physical activity and sports venues.

**Why the
STRONG Kids
Act?**



Only
55%

of kids play youth sports despite the clear health and wellness benefits. Together, we can remove obstacles to give more kids access to sports programs that build confidence, connection and character.