NASPA International - United States Organizational Meeting – November 1 2026

Attendees

Alex Maass	John Luebkemann	Stefan Rau
Ayotunde Adeyeri	Judy Cole	Steven Alexander
Charles Reinke	Lisa Mueller	Thomas Reinke
Cheryl Melvin	Mike Johnson	Tony Leah
Eric Goldstein	Mina Le	Winter
Eric Smith	Sam Kantimathi	
Jason Idalski	Scott Jackson	

Meeting Overview

Purpose: Formation of NASPA International United States (NIUSA) as a WESPA-affiliated organization

Chair Pro Tem: Jason Idalski

Secretary Pro Tem: Judy Cole

Key WESPA Representative: Tony Leah (WESPA Executive Member since 2009)

Key Outcomes

- **NIUSA Formed:** The organization was officially created with unanimous approval (15-0 vote)
- **Bylaws Approved:** Bylaws were adopted with one amendment changing "NASPA sanctioned" to "WESPA sanctioned" tournaments
- **Officers Appointed:** Jason Idalski (Chair Pro Tem) and Judy Cole (Secretary Pro Tem) until elections by January 30, 2027
- **WESPA Application:** Motion passed to apply for WESPA membership representing the United States

Background: Why NIUSA Was Created

WESPA's New Requirements

Tony Leah explained the situation that led to forming NIUSA:

- **One Country, One Organization:** WESPA's executive now requires each country to have only one recognized Scrabble association
- **Previous Arrangement:** NASPA had represented both the US and Canada since 2009, with two quotas at World Championships
- **WESPA Bylaws:** A WESPA resolution to formalize the "one country, one organization" principle was defeated, but the WESPA executive decided to enforce it anyway based on their interpretation of existing bylaws

Parallel Organization: Canada formed NICAN (NASPA International Canada) earlier the same day at 2:00 PM

Important Context: WESPA previously allowed NASPA to hold membership while representing both countries because the arrangement had worked well for 17 years. However, the current WESPA executive majority believes there should be only one association per country, creating pressure for separate US and Canadian organizations.

NIUSA Bylaws (as amended at the meeting) - https://tinyurl.com/NIUSA-Bylaws

Key Discussions and Concerns

Tournament Rating Issues

Mike Johnson raised significant concerns about WESPA tournament ratings:

Current WESPA Rating Requirements:

- Tournaments must have a $2,500 USD first prize to be WESPA-rated, OR
- Tournaments must be approved by the recognized national organization

Mike Johnson's Concerns:

- Most US Collins tournaments are run by organizations other than NASPA (WGPO, COCO)

- Many quality Collins tournaments have 14-16 players but don't meet the $2,500 prize threshold
- The current system creates barriers for connecting the Collins community to WESPA
- Collins players shouldn't have to subsidize NWL activities through NASPA fees

Tony's Clarification:

- The $2,500 requirement is a WESPA rule that NIUSA cannot change
- Major tournaments like World Cup and 4th of July have been WESPA-rated under this exception
- WESPA had temporarily removed the $2,500 loophole but then restored it

Potential Solutions Discussed:

- NIUSA could develop its own rules for sanctioning tournaments
- NIUSA might allow non-NASPA tournaments to receive WESPA rating if they meet certain criteria
- The organization could work to make tournament sanctioning more inclusive

Mike's Proposed Amendment to Bylaws

Mike initially proposed changing the bylaws to say "Collins sanctioned tournaments" instead of "NASPA sanctioned tournaments," arguing that the organization should support all Collins events regardless of which organization runs them.

After discussion, the amendment was refined to change "NASPA sanctioned" to "WESPA sanctioned" tournaments, which was approved by the attendees.

Organizational Structure Debate

Mike's Alternative Vision: Create a broader organization open to NASPA, WGPO, and COCO, not just NASPA-affiliated

Tony's Response:

- Creating a completely separate organization would require building new infrastructure (dues, ratings, sanctioning, rules)
- The current proposal allows NIUSA to leverage existing NASPA infrastructure
- This creates mutual support and benefit without duplication of effort

- The focus can be on promoting Collins play rather than administrative work

Voting Membership Concerns

Mike raised a concern about representation: Since all NASPA members in the US automatically become NIUSA members, the voting membership will consist largely of non-Collins players. How will this ensure Collins players' needs are met?

Response: Jason and others acknowledged this concern but expressed hope that general goodwill within the Scrabble community would prevent this from becoming a problem.

Rules and Gameplay

WESPA vs. NASPA Rules

Jason Idalski explained that WESPA and NASPA rules are very similar, with minor differences – primarily:

Rule	NASPA	WESPA
When challenge rights end	When tile leaves bag	When tile touches opponent's rack
Clock starting	When first tile is seen	When first tile is drawn

Clarification: Both WESPA and NASPA rules specify X+2 tiles revealed for overdraws.

Future Alignment: Tony noted that the WESPA Rules Committee is updating rules and plans to incorporate elements of NASPA's rules, which they consider superior in several areas. The rules are expected to become more similar over time.

Impact on Players and Directors

For Players

- **Seamless Experience:** No changes to how players participate in tournaments
- **Same Dictionary:** Collins (CSW) lexicon continues to be used
- **Same Ratings:** No new rating system required
- **No Additional Dues:** Only existing NASPA membership fees apply

- **Cross-Border Play:** No barriers created for US-Canada tournament participation

For Tournament Directors

Main Change: Sanctioning requests for Collins tournaments will go through NIUSA or NICAN as well as the NASPA tournament committee

Process: NASPA will coordinate with NIUSA and NICAN to establish the specific submission process

Special Cases

Dual Citizens/Residents: Must choose NIUSA or NICAN for voting and nomination eligibility, but can play in tournaments regardless of choice

International Students: Students residing in the US can play in tournaments but are not NIUSA members unless they are US residents or choose US affiliation over their home country

Non-Residents: Can play in NIUSA-sanctioned tournaments without being members; membership only affects voting and nomination rights

Next Steps

Jason Idalski (Chair Pro Tem)

- Apply for membership in WESPA on behalf of NIUSA
- Arrange for executive elections to take place no later than January 31, 2027

Judy Cole (Secretary Pro Tem)

- Update the bylaws to reflect the approved amendment changing "NASPA sanctioned tournaments" to "WESPA sanctioned tournaments" in the purposes section

NASPA

- Coordinate with NIUSA and NICAN on the process for submitting tournament sanction requests

NIUSA (Future Work)

- Determine whether to allow non-NASPA tournaments to be WESPA rated and under what conditions

- Communicate to members, especially dual citizens/residents, about choosing between NIUSA and NICAN for voting eligibility
- Focus on strategies to increase support for Collins play in the US
- Promote youth and school Scrabble using the CSW lexicon

Outstanding Questions

Issues to Be Resolved:

- Will NIUSA allow non-NASPA tournaments (WGPO, COCO) to receive WESPA rating through NIUSA sanctioning?
- How will NIUSA ensure Collins players' needs are represented when most voting members play NWL?
- Will WESPA approve the applications from both NIUSA and NICAN?
- How will dual citizens be identified and notified of their need to choose an affiliation?