

Recession spurs interest in amateur refereeing !

(AP) Administrators around the country are reporting an increase in the number of people interested in officiating, especially in areas hit hard by the recession.

High school sports organizations in the Rust Belt report a significant uptick. Michigan had just over 13,000 officials last school year, up 1,000 from five years previous. The situation is similar in Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Hank Zaborniak of the Ohio High School Athletic Association says it's easy to tell which parts of the state are struggling economically. Those are the places with plenty of officials.

Zaborniak says a ref might make \$12,000 to \$14,000 a year working three sports as often as asked.

In **North Dakota**, the problem is different. Referees say some high school **Football** teams have been forced to play on Thursdays and Saturdays because there aren't enough officials to work the traditional Friday games.

Minot veteran ref Jeff Risk says some people have to be dragged to an officials meeting.

The **high school activities association** has been on a blitz of running ads, public service announcements and door-to-door sales to try to find new refs.

