



INFORMATION

Hot Spots for Title IX Athletics

After thirty years of Title IX, we've come a long way, but there is still so much more to do. Although women are over half of all college undergraduates, male athletes still far outnumber female athletes and receive nearly twice as much of total athletic operating budgets as women. And although national data on athletics at the high school level are not available, news reports and anecdotal information indicate that female athletes at this level are frequently treated like second-class citizens. Below are recent examples of the athletic inequities that women and girls face in communities across the country:

California – A recent investigation into California's 108 community colleges found disparities in financing for men's and women's athletic programs. It found that women are 56.2 percent of the full-time students, yet women's sports receive only 35 percent of the money allocated to athletics.

Colorado – The University of Colorado's cheerleading squad instituted a mandatory 120-lb limit on female, but not male members of its elite competitive squad. The current healthy weight guidelines by Weight Watchers put a 5'7" woman of college age at 127 to 148 lbs.

Florida – A successful Title IX lawsuit and a survey by a local newspaper in Central Florida have brought to light the inequitable facilities for female high school softball players compared to those for male baseball players. For example, girls often play off-campus on substandard fields that lack lights, lockers and permanent toilets, while boys play on campus and have all the amenities.

Georgia – After a series of newspaper articles exposing gender inequities across the state, the Governor of Georgia signed legislation requiring public schools to submit information on the treatment of male and female athletes. An Atlanta paper found that 95% of "extended pay" supplements went to coaches of boys' sports, while girls' coaches got 5%. Moreover, 86% of the legislative grants made for stadiums, lighting and equipment were directed to projects where the primary beneficiaries were boys' sports. Booster clubs also contributed to gender inequities.

Louisiana – Local reports abound about the small number of sanctioned sports for girls and the inequitable facilities, equipment, and budgets for and the treatment of, female student athletes in the New Orleans metro area. Stories include: boys' football and baseball teams having their own practice fields, while the girls' softball team has to make do with the school's front lawn; girls make up 41 percent of the athletes, but get only 23 percent of the available coaching funds; and boys' events are regularly promoted over the school PA system, while girls' events, even victories, are not promoted. At the college level, Louisiana State University and five female former students reached a settlement agreement in a Title IX case. The University agreed to payments for the plaintiffs and their attorneys and agreed to



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support women's athletics by providing equity in scholarships, facilities, coaching, marketing, support staff and travel.

Michigan – A federal court in Grand Rapids recently ruled that the state high school athletic association is discriminating against female student athletes by scheduling six girls' sports, and no boys' sports, in the wrong seasons. The plaintiffs successfully settled other issues, such as the lack of tournament opportunities for female athletes, inferior facilities, and poor promotion and support of girls' programs. NWLC served as of counsel in this closely watched Title IX case. In addition, a survey of Michigan's 33 largest school districts found that girls were routinely shortchanged out of a chance to play athletics.

North Carolina – Heather Sue Mercer won a lawsuit against Duke University for treating her differently from the rest of the football players after allowing her to join the team as a kicker in 1995. The coach also made offensive comments, such as why she was interested in football and not beauty pageants. A jury awarded Mercer \$2 million in punitive damages. In 2001, Duke filed an appeal that is still pending in court.

New York – In a recent evaluation of girls' athletic participation rates, less than one-third (10 of 38) of public school districts in Buffalo had a gender gap of less than 5 percent. Half a dozen districts had double-digit gaps, with Lackawanna district having the biggest gap of 18 percent. Lackawanna's athletic director said the excuse for the gap is the lack of interest from girls, though the district admits to not surveying the girls or trying to determine their interest levels.

Oklahoma – Several Title IX athletics lawsuits have been brought against public school districts in Oklahoma. A lawsuit against Hominy public schools was settled after the district agreed to expand locker room facilities for girls, upgrade the softball field and likely add at least one more sport after determining student interest.

Pennsylvania – Although strapped for funds, several of the school districts in Western Pennsylvania find the money for boys' sports, but not for girls' sports. In Duquesne, for every dollar the school board spent on sports, girls received only a dime. The district also spent more on the football team than it did to maintain its school buildings. In Brownsville, of every dollar spent on athletics, only 5 cents goes to girls' sports. Brownsville offers only one girls' sport, basketball.

Tennessee – The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) is investigating a Title IX complaint recently filed against Tennessee Technological University alleging inequities in athletic equipment, supplies, facilities, support services, travel, per diem expenses and publicity. OCR is also investigating complaints of discrimination against female athletes filed against school districts in Rutherford, McNairy and Henderson counties.

Virginia – A Richmond area survey on the treatment of female athletes revealed many complaints from coaches, athletes and parents. One parent wondered why the girls' softball team sits on a rustic bench while the boys' baseball team gets an enclosed cinderblock dugout. And when a girls' field hockey coach asked why her team was relegated to a terribly maintained field with broken glass, the athletic director said it was because they did not feel it was safe enough for the football team.

