

WOMEN'S LAW PROJECT

Safeguarding Rights, Creating Opportunities

Pennsylvania's Secondary School Athletic Reporting Bills of 2009

Pennsylvania's Athletic Reporting Bills, S.B. 890 and H.B. 2061, require Pennsylvania secondary schools to report basic data on the numbers of female and male students and athletes by sex, race, and ethnicity, and information about athletic facilities, equipment, coaching, and athletic expenditures by gender. These bills require schools to submit an annual report to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, which will make the information publicly available.

MYTH 1: The Reporting of Secondary School Athletics Equity Act is not needed because Title IX has leveled the playing field.

FACT 1: Girls still do not receive as many opportunities to play sports as boys do.

Despite the growth of female athletic participation since Title IX was enacted, the gap in athletic participation opportunities between boys and girls has widened from 1.13 five years ago to 1.3 million today.¹ Girls make up half of the high school population,² but receive only 41% of all athletic participation opportunities.³ No state is providing athletic opportunities to its female athletes in numbers that are proportionate to their enrollment in school. Even when girls are given opportunities to play, they often receive inferior treatment as compared to male athletes. This translates into lost opportunities to reap the benefits of participation⁴ as well as access to college athletic scholarships.⁵

MYTH 2: The Reporting of Secondary School Athletics Equity Act imposes an undue burden on school administrators.

FACT 2: School officials already collect the information that The Reporting of Secondary School Athletics Equity Act requires them to report, but it is not readily available to the public.

The National Federation of State High School Associations already requires that school administrators submit annual reports of their athletic participation numbers by sport and gender to their state high school athletic associations. Additionally, school bookkeepers already keep records of all school expenditures—including those made within the athletic department—and athletics administrators maintain budgets for each male and female sport. Therefore, the Act merely requires that schools transfer this existing data into a report that is publicly available, a task that should take an administrator from two to six hours maximum, depending on the number of sports offered.⁶

MYTH 3: The information required to be collected by the Reporting of Secondary School Athletics Equity Act serves no useful purpose.

FACT 3: The Act shines a spotlight on the athletic opportunities that schools provide to girls and boys, which will help ensure that girls are not deprived of equal opportunities to play sports.

This Act will help high school administrators, parents, and students assess and ensure compliance with Title IX. To help assess college and university compliance with Title IX, Congress adopted the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act (EADA), which requires colleges and universities to publish annual reports detailing enrollment, athletic participation and other data regarding their athletic programs by gender. The public availability of this information has allowed post-secondary schools and their students to take steps to achieve equity. The lack of a reporting requirement for Pennsylvania secondary schools allows schools to disregard athletic equity and puts parents and students who seek to advocate for equity at an enormous disadvantage.

¹ National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS). *2007-2008 High School Athletics Participation Survey*. (<http://www.nfhs.org/>).

² National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). 2006-2007. (<http://nces.ed.gov/>).

³ See note 1.

⁴ Research shows that girls who play sports have a reduced risk of breast cancer, heart disease, and depression; they have higher grades, are less likely to drop out, and have higher graduation rates than their non-athletic peers; and they have lower rates of sexual activity/pregnancy and are less likely to smoke or use drugs. For more information, see Sabo, D. et al. (2004). *Her Life Depends On It: Sport, Physical Activity, and the Health and Well-Being of American Girls*. East Meadow, NY: Women's Sports Foundation.

⁵ For some, an athletic scholarship is the only path to college.

⁶ Conversations between Women's Sports foundation staff and compliance officers at the Georgia and Kentucky State High School Athletic Association and high school athletic directors in Missouri. May 2007.