

# Women's Law Project

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## WOMEN'S LAW PROJECT RELEASES REPORT DETAILING STATE OF GENDER EQUITY IN ATHLETICS IN PENNSYLVANIA'S COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Today, the Women's Law Project released a detailed report looking into the state of gender equity in athletics in Pennsylvania's colleges and universities. *Gender Equity in Intercollegiate Athletics: Where Does Pennsylvania Stand?* is the first of its kind in the country and finds that, even with the advances of Title IX, Pennsylvania's institutions of higher education have a long road to travel before they can be said to be treating their female athletes fairly. "Women outnumber men on Pennsylvania's college campuses but schools continue to pour more resources into men's sports than women's sports," stated report author David S. Cohen, staff attorney at the Women's Law Project.

The Women's Law Project's report looks at publicly available data for the three school years from 2001 through 2004. In that time period, over 110 colleges and universities from Pennsylvania publicly reported data about athletic participation. One of the report's striking findings is that if Pennsylvania's schools were being fair, there would be over 8000 more athletic opportunities for women in the state. Women constitute over 53% of full-time undergraduate enrollment in Pennsylvania, but have available to them only 43% of athletic opportunities.

Nationwide, schools often use football programs as an excuse for not offering equitable opportunities for female athletes; however, several Pennsylvania schools with football programs do an excellent job complying with Title IX's athletic opportunity requirements. In particular, Penn State's main campus, with its perennially competitive and nationally prominent football team, had an excellent record of providing equal athletic opportunities for women over the three years studied. "It's very simple: schools committed to their female athletes can be fair and nondiscriminatory if they choose to do so; schools that point to football as a scapegoat are just making excuses for their choice to discriminate," said Cohen.

The report also found staggering differences in funding for women's athletics. Schools in Pennsylvania spent \$.60 on women's athletics for every \$1 spent on men's athletics. In two of the worst areas of spending, Pennsylvania's colleges and universities spent roughly twice as much money on recruiting male athletes as on female athletes and 50% more on coaching men's sports than coaching women's sports.

"Athletic participation provides female students with a wealth of educational, physical, and mental benefits," said Carol Tracy, the Women's Law Project's Executive Director. "By shortchanging their women's athletics programs, Pennsylvania's schools are shortchanging their female students in ways that affect the entirety of their lives."

As recommendations for future actions, the report urges schools to review their athletics programs and to rectify any inequities that exist. Also, the report encourages students to pressure their school administrations to make women's athletics a priority and, if necessary, to investigate their particular school and bring legal charges if the school does not respond to requests for change.

Furthermore, the report recommends legislation, either state or federal, requiring reporting of high school athletic participation data. "Colleges and universities are held accountable under a federal law that requires reporting their athletic data; no law in Pennsylvania or nationwide requires high schools to do the same. Without holding high schools accountable, there won't be a sufficient pipeline of female athletes from high schools to colleges," said Peg Pennepacker, athletic director of Blue Mountain High School in Schuylkill County.

The executive summary and full version of the report are available on the Women's Law Project's website - <http://www.womenslawproject.org>. The Women's Law Project is a public interest law center that has fought for legal and economic equality for women and their families since 1974. The Women's Law Project has a long history of advocating in favor of greater participation for female athletes in high school and college, through litigation and public policy advocacy.

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