

## Key Public Policy Projects

### Championing the Rights of Girls and Women to Participate and be Treated Equally In Sport

#### Equal Play Campaign

Do the cheerleaders at your school only cheer for the boys' games? Do the girls' teams play at 4 p.m. on Friday nights while the boys' teams always play at 7 p.m.? Did an alumnus just renovate the school baseball facility while the softball facility is in desperate need of repair?

Most importantly, do you know that answering yes to these questions might mean your school is out of compliance with Title IX? If you answered no to that question, you are not alone. Despite the law being in existence for more than 36 years, many parents, athletes and coaches remain uninformed about the many ways that Title IX requires equal play.

The Women's Sports Foundation is launching a new grassroots education and advocacy campaign, "Equal Play," to educate students, parents and coaches about Title IX. The campaign will begin by targeting three communities — Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Seattle — where the Foundation will hire a Public Policy Officer to work on the ground to provide education and technical assistance to empower individuals to improve compliance in their local school systems.

This project requires \$400,000 annually to support new local Public Policy Officers, Foundation staff, the development and distribution of educational curriculum, and a targeted communications plan to publicize the campaign.

#### High School Data Collection Act

The Equity in Athletics Disclosure (EADA) Act, a data collection law currently in place for colleges, allows anyone to go online (<http://ope.ed.gov/athletics/index.asp>) to look up any college and university in the country and find out how it is doing in the treatment of male and female athletes. We need the same mechanism for high schools!

The High School Accountability Act in the House and the High School Sports Information Collection Act in the Senate would replicate the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act and mandate that all high schools annually provide the government and the general public with data on sports participation and financial expenditures to better enable a determination whether high schools are in compliance with Title IX.

Annual funding of \$50,000 covers Women's Sports Foundation staff, travel and meeting expenses, data collection, publications, public relations and administration costs associated with Congressional hearings, press events, etc.



*"I wanted to compete on the same track at the same time as my team members. But because of my disability, the school forced me to participate alone. But I found an advocate in the Women's Sports Foundation. They worked with my family and the Maryland Disability Law Center to ensure that I was allowed to compete alongside my teammates."*  
— Tatyana McFadden, Paralympic medalist

Despite significant progress, opportunities for girls and women to participate in high school sports are falling far short of gender equality—1.3 million participation opportunities short. No data is available for individual high schools other than participation numbers by gender, provided by the National Federation of State High School Athletic Associations. A 50-state report is compiled annually and issued by the Women's Sports Foundation.

#### Athletic Equity for Students with Disabilities

Currently, opportunities for physical education and athletics for students with disabilities are virtually non-existent. Individuals with disabilities are almost three times as likely to be sedentary as individuals without disabilities. Neither the National Federation of State High School Associations nor the NCAA officially sanctions any intercollegiate or interscholastic program, event or competition for individuals with disabilities.

Unlike what exists under Title IX, there is not clear policy guidance under the Rehabilitation Act for what schools' obligations are to provide physical education and athletic opportunities for individuals with disabilities. To address this issue, this May, after efforts by the Women's Sports Foundation, a landmark piece of legislation in Maryland was passed: The Fitness and Athletic Equity for Students with Disabilities Act. This Act is a landmark piece of legislation

that, for the first time, specifies the actions school systems must take to include students with disabilities in physical education and athletic programs. The bill requires that schools ensure that students with disabilities have equal opportunities to participate in physical education and athletic programs, develop policies and procedures to promote and protect the inclusion of students with disabilities, and provide annual reporting to the Maryland State Department of Education detailing their compliance with these requirements.

However, while we have won an important match in Maryland, the set is not yet complete. The lack of opportunities for students with disabilities in school physical activity programs is not isolated to Maryland. To fully eradicate this issue and ensure that individuals with disabilities see the same growth in participation as female athletes did under Title IX, the Foundation will continue working diligently to ensure that other states and the federal government follow Maryland's lead and adopt the Fitness and Athletics Equity for Students with Disabilities Act.

Annual funding of \$50,000 covers Women's Sports Foundation staff, travel and meeting expenses, data collection, publications, public relations and administration costs associated with advancing federal and state legislation for individuals with disabilities.

### Toll-free Advocacy Hotline

Has your school just dropped the women's gymnastics team? Has your daughter been sexually harassed by her high school track coach? Does the softball team you coach not have an on-campus playing facility?

These examples represent just some of the cases that come into the Women's Sports Foundation Advocacy Hotline each month. In addition to working to maintain a strong Title IX and a comprehensive public policy agenda that increases opportunities for girls and women to participate in sports and physical activity, the Women's Sports Foundation responds to hundreds of calls and e-mails asking for help with specific gender equity, Title IX, the Amateur Sports Act, and coaching and employment situations at the local level. The Foundation provides these callers with the resources and tools to address these inequities in their schools and programs.

Funding of \$40,000 annually will allow for the staffing of this hotline and the development of education materials and resources to distribute to callers.