

# NCWGE NATIONAL COALITION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN EDUCATION

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## **Women & Girls to President Bush: “Hands Off Title IX!”**

### *National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education Available for Comment during Commission on Opportunity in Athletics Meeting on Jan. 29 and 30*

(Washington, D.C.) As President Bush’s Commission on Opportunity in Athletics convenes for its final meeting at the Hotel Washington in Washington D.C. today and tomorrow, women and girls across the country are mobilizing to urge the Administration to leave Title IX athletics policies alone. Despite the fact that women and girls have not yet been provided with equal opportunities in education and athletics, the Commission is slated to recommend radical changes to the current standards for enforcing Title IX that will decimate opportunities for high school and college women in sports. After this week’s meeting, the Commission will issue a report to the Secretary of Education on Feb. 28. **NCWGE members are available for comment on the Commission’s proposals.**

“With the stroke of a pen, the Bush Administration could reverse three decades of progress for women and girls in education and athletics. This Commission is the first step to dismantling Title IX,” said Jamie Fasteau, Chair of NCWGE and Government Relations Manager at American Association of University Women.

Some of the most devastating proposals being considered by the Commission include:

- Allowing colleges and universities to limit the number of scholarships awarded to female athletes without regard to enrollment. Under this proposal, schools could devote as little as 43% of their athletic scholarships to women and still be found in compliance with Title IX.
- Allowing schools “variances” from one of three alternative ways to comply with Title IX under current law, the proportionality prong. These proposals would find schools in compliance with Title IX’s participation requirements without requiring them to provide equal opportunities and without satisfying either of the other two prongs of current standards.
- Allowing schools to avoid Title IX compliance with “interest surveys” on the assumption that more men than women are interested in sports. But interest surveys assess girls’ lack of previous opportunities to play sports, not necessarily their actual interests.

“The Commission’s proposals tell schools they can comply with Title IX while falling far short of equal opportunity for women and girls. It is not only outrageous, but insulting to women and girls – and their fathers and brothers -- across this country,” said Leslie Annexstein, Vice Chair of NCWGE and Senior Counsel, National Women’s Law Center.

The NCWGE also objects to the Commission’s hearing process. From the beginning, the Administration’s appointments to the Commission disproportionately represented those with an institutional interest in weakening Title IX. Among other process violations, the invited panelists hand-picked by the Department of Education consistently presented unbalanced views, with the majority speaking in opposition to Title IX, at public hearings in the fall. In addition,

the Commission is basing its recommendations on an incomplete record that includes little or no information on current Title IX policies.

The NCWGE calls on the Bush Administration to reject the Commission's radical proposals and recommends strengthened enforcement of existing policies instead.

**Detailed briefing papers on the Commission's proposals are available at [www.ncwge.org](http://www.ncwge.org).**

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*NCWGE was formed in 1975 by representatives of national organizations concerned about the failure to issue regulations implementing Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. NCWGE was successful in mobilizing strong support for publication of the Title IX regulations by the then Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. NCWGE continues to be a major force in developing national education policies that benefit all women and girls, providing a valuable forum to share information and strategies to advance educational equity, advocate for women's and girls' interests on issues regarding Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and monitor federal agencies' implementation of federal education programs.*