

Democrats unanimous as House passes bill forcing schools to let male athletes compete in girl's sports

The Democratically controlled House of Representatives voted Friday 236-173 in favor of the Equality Act, which would require schools to include male athletes who identify as transgender girls on female sports teams.

Eight Republicans crossed party lines to vote for the bill, which had unanimous Democratic support.

The bill amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to make "sexual orientation and gender identity" protected characteristics under federal anti-discrimination law.

Among other things, that would force public schools to expand female athletic teams to include biological males who identify as transgender girls.

Republican Florida Rep. Greg Steube introduced a last-minute amendment to the bill that would have preserved Title IX's protections of female athletic teams, but Democrats rejected it.

Every House Democrat but one co-sponsored the legislation. The only Democrat who wasn't a co-sponsor, Illinois Rep. Dan Lipinski, announced his support for the bill following pressure from left-wing activists.

"People need to wake up. This radical bill is going to totally eliminate women's and girls sports," Republican Arizona Rep. Debbie Lesko warned in an op-ed Thursday.

Republican Missouri Rep. Vicky Hartzler and a half-dozen other House Republicans held a press conference Thursday in opposition to what Hartzler dubbed the "Inequality Act."

"Congress enacted Title IX to provide equal opportunities for women in education and sports. All this is erased under H.R. 5," Hartzler said at the press conference.

Three former elite female athletes, Doriane Coleman, Martina Navratilova and Sanya Richards-Ross, warned that the Equality Act would wreak havoc on women's sports in an April 29 Washington Post op-ed.

"The legislation would make it unlawful to differentiate among girls and women in sports on the basis of sex for any purpose. For example, a sports team couldn't treat a transgender woman differently from a woman who is not transgender on the grounds that the former is male-bodied," the former athletes wrote.

"Yet the reality is that putting male- and female-bodied athletes together is co-ed or open sport. And in open sport, females lose," the three women warned.

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House Judiciary Chairman Jerry Nadler, a Democrat from New York, insisted the bill wouldn't put female athletes at a disadvantage.



House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerry Nadler is pictured. (Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

“Many states have sexual orientation and gender identity nondiscrimination laws, and all of them still have women’s sports. Arguments about transgender athletes participating in sports in accordance with their gender identity having competitive advantages have not been borne out,” Nadler said at a April 2 hearing on the bill.

In Connecticut, one of the states to which Nadler was referring, two male runners have dominated girls’ high school track. A female competitor called the male runners’ advantage “demoralizing.”

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