

# THE SACRAMENTO BEE

## Title IX anniversary brings out the statistics, nostalgia and knives

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In 1973, just a year after Congress passed education legislation now known simply as Title IX, tennis great Bobby Riggs took to a court in Houston to face female tennis champion Billie Jean King in a match he practically sneered at from the outset. Who knows if there was anyone among those watching who made any connection between that event and the law that required all schools that receive federal funding to provide equal educational opportunities for its male and female students?

But just like Title IX, that tennis match was about more than just grinding out a win on the field of athletics. It was social commentary.

In London, the Sunday Times proclaimed it "the drop shot and volley heard around the world."

"The match didn't just change women's tennis, it changed tennis," said King in a 2008 interview with NPR.

Now a tennis legend, Billie Jean King spoke May 9 at a luncheon at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., about the U.S. Tennis Association's initiative to get kids under 10 involved in tennis as a path to a healthy lifestyle. When the traditional question period arrived at the end of her speech, the first one was about this year's 40th anniversary of the landmark Title IX. The 1972 U.S. Open women's champion got a little emotional in her response.

The question: Do you think it's still needed? And if so, should it be changed or expanded and how?

"Well, it's the 40th anniversary. It was passed June 23rd, 1972. One of my heroes (sic) is Ms. Green, Congressman Green of Oregon. She's no longer with us. But it was her idea. She was called the Mother of Education. And then the other person who's one of my heroes is Senator Birch Bayh who was in the Senate and introduced the bill. These people were fantastic," said King.

". . . it was about education, it wasn't about sports. That's how it originated. Sports was tagged on as a last-minute thought. Before 1972, the quotas at the Harvards of the world were 5 percent, if you wanted to be a woman doctor, if you wanted to be a woman lawyer, OK? These were our forward-thinking educators. A woman could not get an athletic scholarship until the fall of 1972. And there weren't very many in the fall of 1972, I can tell you. There was hardly any because a lot of schools resisted on changing the law."

Adele Kimmel of Public Justice ([www.publicjustice.net](http://www.publicjustice.net)), appearing on a panel about where we are now on Title IX, hosted by the Cato Institute in Washington, D.C., on June 20, said the popular focus on the sports aspect of Title IX lies in the fact that only athletic teams are sex-segregated in the education arena. She said Title IX requires equal opportunity to participate in sports, but not quotas. And it does not require schools to cut men's sports.

But colleges and universities are famously cutting sports teams in this economic environment. And some schools explain that their sports activities bloated under Title IX.

"Sports cuts are not the fault of Title IX," said Neal McCluskey, associate director of the Cato Institute's Center for Educational Freedom, also on the panel. The cuts are the fault of the universities "and poor financial management," he said.

In McCluskey's view, 40 is old enough for Title IX. "It should not be allowed to get any older." He cited statistics that he said indicate that up until 1972, the percentage growth of women going to college far exceeded the growth in college attendance among women since then. He hinted that something was already happening in society to drive women's interest in education.

"Culture almost always has to change first before the government designs policy," he explained. So maybe the question has to be asked, in 1972, was there clear evidence Title IX was needed?

"Women are still 168 million behind every year in scholarships and opportunities," King went on with her answer. "So when you read the sports section, you think we're terrible because we're hurting the football programs, we're hurting the men's sports. Believe me, both men and women sports are being dropped in certain universities and colleges. And the one thing I keep telling them, the athletic directors, do not get rid of tennis. Do not get rid of men's tennis or women's tennis because we are a lifetime sport and we have obesity in this country and we should be encouraging lifetime sports in our universities if we're going to have a healthy nation. . . . Sorry, I get a little wound up."

Sabrina Schaeffer, executive director of the Independent Women's Forum, another panelist, talked about "unintended consequences" of Title IX, including a fall-off in men's participation in collegiate sports while women's rose during the '80s up to the early 2000s.

She said the next gender battle for Title IX is in the STEM fields - science, technology, engineering and mathematics. "And we should not perpetuate the idea that universities are aggressively discriminating against women through seeking funding for various types of programs that appeal more to men," Schaeffer said. This effort should actually help women, and statistics indicate that women are getting more degrees (by a small margin) than are men today. But the implication by some groups pushing the STEM agenda is that women tend to gravitate toward fields of study that are not on par with men's traditional preferences.

"Gender equality seems to be not enough today," she said. "We seem to think we need gender parity" as well.

"One of my concerns in this whole conversation is that the genders can't be different," Schaeffer said. "It might be helpful to step back and say 'what would it look like if we were equal?'"

Kimmel said society and the education field need to "embrace the differences between men and women, but because they are different, women shouldn't have a disadvantage or miss out on opportunities" that men tend to have set before them.

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