Feminist Vendetta Against Men's Sports

by Phyllis Schlafly December 11, 2009

We were shocked to read a November report from the U.S. Army that 75 percent of America's 17- to 24-year-olds are not eligible for military service, largely because they are poorly educated, involved in crime, or are physically unfit. According to this report titled Ready, Willing and Unable to Serve, 27 percent of young Americans can't join the military because they are too fat, out of shape, can't do push-ups or pull-ups, and can't run.

The Obama Administration claims that the solution for this dilemma is to spend lots of money on pre-K schooling, but that doesn't pass the laugh test. A better remedy would be to terminate "Title-Nining," the malicious anti-masculine weapon used by feminists to eliminate men's sports in college and high school.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a federal law passed to prohibit discrimination "on the basis of sex" in schools and colleges. Its sponsors solemnly promised it would never result in quotas, so it seemed like a good law to assure women every educational opportunity.

The radical feminists saw Title IX as an opening to pursue their anti-male agenda. Jimmy Carter's Department of Education created a three-point test for compliance with Title IX, one of which was that intercollegiate sports for males and females should be "proportionate" to college enrollment. That means, if half of the students taking academic classes are female, then half of the students playing on athletic teams must be female. The word "proportionate" is not in the law; the Education Department gave the word a newly created definition to force colleges to adopt quotas, which Title IX's sponsors explicitly promised would never happen.

This rule was and still is unfair and ridiculous because it's a fact of human nature that female college students do not seek to play on athletic teams in anywhere near the percentage that male students do. For example, "re-entry" women (older women who return to college after their children are grown) surely aren't going back to college to play soccer.

In the Clinton Administration, the feminists pursuing their anti-male agenda in the Education Department's Civil Rights Office, essentially made "proportionate" the only test that matters for Title IX compliance by colleges that must cut their sports budgets. They used the power of the bureaucracy and activist judges to threaten college athletic departments. Colleges have every reason to fear lawsuits from failure to kowtow to feminist dictates. Losing a lawsuit means the college must pay the feminist lawyers' attorneys' fees and suffer adverse publicity.

Now that nearly 60% of students taking academic classes are female, 60% of students playing on athletic teams (and receiving athletic scholarships) must be female, and men's teams by the hundreds have been abolished, especially sports at which men excel, many of them trophy-winning teams.

Title IX quotas forced the elimination of 467 college wrestling teams, a particular target of feminist anti-masculine ideology. This shows that Title IX is not about equalizing male-female funding, since wrestling is one of the least expensive sports.

Other victims of Title Nining include men's track and field and swimming. Title IX caused the elimination of all but 19 men's college gymnastics teams, and even forced Howard University to cancel its baseball team.

This injustice hit us hard at the Olympics in Beijing. The Chinese (who are not restricted by feminist nonsense) won seven out of eight gold medals in men's gymnastics, while our team failed to win a single gold medal in eight events.

In the Olympics, we compete against other countries that field their best athletes without regard to political correctness. Title IX disadvantages our country by denying opportunities to male athletes and pushing less talented women into sports just to get free college tuition, not because they are keen on sports.

Reducing opportunities for college sports is a powerful disincentive to men and is a major cause of the dramatic drop in male attendance. Why bother attending college if men can't play the sport they love?

Since the feminists had their confrontation with Harvard President Larry Summers in 2005, they have also been Title Nining to force colleges to hire less math-qualified female professors instead of more qualified men. Funny thing, we don't hear proposals to force universities to subsidize male professors to teach women's studies.

Congress has amended Title IX numerous times to carve out exceptions to this gender-neutral law (exceptions for single-sex schools, colleges, seminaries, contact sports, fraternities, sororities, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, American Legion Girls State and Boys State, and Mother-Daughter and Father-Son school events). It's time for another amendment to get rid of "proportionality" silliness in order to solve the problems of the much disliked 40-60 male-female ratio in colleges and also to graduate more students who are physically qualified for our volunteer military.