



Mark Desetti

mark.desetti@knea.org

Opponent - Oral Testimony

SB 208 - *Creating the fairness in women's sports act to require that female student athletic teams only include members who are biologically female.*

Senate Education Committee

February 23, 2021

Madam Chair, members of the Committee, KNEA stands in opposition to Senate Bill 208.

First, we believe that the regulation of school sports programs belongs to the Kansas State High School Activities Association. Those who work in sports programs and interact with student athletes are in the best position to determine how to implement sports programs in our schools.

Secondly, Kansas NEA opposes discrimination in all areas of life on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, creed, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Such discrimination is detrimental to society, creates unfair and unjust divisions, and leads to bullying, anger, depression, anxiety, and other negative mental health impacts.

It seems that a fundamental truth is that times change. Most of us struggle against changes because it is far more comfortable to not to have to consider the changes. But societal attitudes do change, and it is incumbent upon those of us who still wish the world was the same as it was when we were in high school to find a way to accept and adapt to societal changes - even those with which we may personally be uncomfortable.

Schools were once segregated. We now accept that they are not and should not be.

Interracial and same-sex marriage were once illegal. Today they are celebrated.

Homosexuals were once institutionalized and even imprisoned. Today, rainbow flags proliferate.

Many of we older folks who have worked in public relations campaigns once spent hours crafting the perfect photograph that included a white, an African-American, an Hispanic, an Asian, and someone with a disability. Today's young people wonder what we were thinking because they have learned by and large to look past race and color and disability and just see people and peers.

And at this point in our history, more walls are coming down. We are opening to the reality of transgendered individuals. It is becoming common for individuals to post on their social media presence and on their work, name badges their preferred pronouns.



KANSAS NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION / 715 SW 10TH AVENUE / TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1686

Before Title IX, people did not think that women should be competing in team sports in our schools. Times changed.

Before Liz Heaston, a woman competing in college football was unthinkable. But in 1997 **Liz Heaston**, with the NAIA Willamette Bearcats became the first woman to score in a college football game. Heaston's football career lasted two games.

By 2003, **Katharine Hnida**, with the University of New Mexico Lobos became the first woman to score in an NCAA Division 1 football game.

In 2015, **April Goss**, with the Kent State Golden Flashes (NCAA, Div. 1) became the second female in FBS history to record a point in a game, following a second-quarter extra point against Delaware State. April was redshirted in 2012 and played for Kent State for four years.

And 2020, **Sarah Fuller**, with the Vanderbilt Commodores became the first woman to play in a football game for a [Power Five conference](#) team and to score in a Power Five conference game.

Women are proving every day that they can compete with men. Why do we continue to think of them as “the weaker sex?”

I would suggest that we live in different times.

A few years ago there was outrage about Caitlyn Jenner. Many people remembered Bruce Jenner competing in the Olympics and appearing on the Wheaties box. But suddenly angry Americans were demanding that Caitlyn be stripped of Bruce's Olympic medals. Why? Because if “he” was now a “she,” it was wrong to let “her” keep medals after competing with men. It seems the prevailing attitude might have been that Bruce Jenner should have competed in the women's events. The argument was the complete opposite of the intent of this bill.

Bruce Jenner did not become Caitlyn Jenner to prove that women can compete against men. And no teen male is considering changing gender to be the best player on a volleyball team and so gain a scholarship.

SB 208 is a solution to a problem that exists only in the attitudes of those who can't comprehend or accept the changes that society is now going through. Today's young people will lead the way. We should let them do it.