Title IX is a clause of the Educational Amendments of 1972 that reads: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." Title IX has led to equal treatment of men and women in a great variety of federally-funded activities but it has received the most notice by far as it applies to high school and college sports. Title IX was controversial from its inception, but several amendments aimed at weakening it have been consistently voted down. The Office for Civil Rights in the Dept. of Education is responsible for enforcing athletic parity under Title IX.

Title IX's requirement that men's and women's sports be funded in fair proportion propelled an enormous growth in women's sports and helped produce many first-class female athletes beginning in the late 20th cent. The implementation of Title IX has also, on occasion, led to the curtailment of some men's sports when institutions have chosen to achieve parity in part by reducing expenditures on men. A 2003 federal study recommended that there be changes in the law that would insure that opportunities for female athletes did not come at the expense of male athletes. Four years later another study revealed that since the passage of Title IX there had been an overall decrease in the number of male athletes competing in NCAA Division I sports, but that this loss was more than offset by gains in Divisions II and III.


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