

# Dan Knodl: Preserving Fairness and Safety in Sports

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I joined State Representative Barb Dittrich (R-Oconomowoc) in bringing forth legislation to save girls'/women's sports.

Organized sports are built on the principle of fair and safe competition. The movement to open girls'/women's sports to biological males raises legitimate concerns about the inherent physical advantages that males tend to possess. These advantages include differences in muscle mass, bone density, metabolism rates, and lung capacity, which are already emergent by early adolescence. This disparity increases the risk of injury, which is why men's and women's sports have always been separated.

In addition to concerns around safety, changing this arrangement becomes a serious matter when it limits opportunities for female athletes to succeed and advance in their chosen sports. Allowing biological males to participate in female sports could deny deserving female athletes the recognition, scholarships, and university admissions that come with athletic achievement. This is why we have Title IX protections, which exist to ensure equal opportunities for female athletes and to address these historical disparities.

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The Saving Women's Sports Act will preserve gender-specific sports categories at the high school and collegiate level, based on the athletes' biological sex, while allowing for the creation of co-ed sports teams. This will ensure that female athletes have equal access to athletic opportunities and fair recognition based on their

talents and efforts.

In today's debate about inclusion in athletic competition, we cannot ignore concerns related to fairness, physical advantage, and the preservation of opportunities for female athletes. This debate became particularly prominent since the International Olympic Committee released guidelines in 2017 allowing transgender women (biological males who transitioned to female) to compete in the women's category if their testosterone levels were below a certain threshold. Many states have begun to introduce legislation to address this controversy and ensure that we are protecting the rights of all athletes involved while preserving fairness and safety in competition.

These bills will add Wisconsin to the list of states addressing this important issue. They are also reflective of the will of the people, as the recent Marquette University Law Poll reveals over 70% of Wisconsinites believe that athletic participation should be based on their gender at birth. As we move forward on this sensitive issue, the legislature stands committed to finding solutions that do not compromise fairness, risk physical injury, or jeopardize the hard-fought gains of female athletes.

*-Knodl, R-Germantown, represents the 8th Senate District.*