

Office of the Governor  
State of Louisiana

JOHN BEL EDWARDS  
GOVERNOR



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June 29, 2021

**VIA HAND DELIVERY**

Honorable Page Cortez  
Louisiana Senate President  
Louisiana State Senate  
Post Office Box 94183  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

RE: Veto of Senate Bill 156 of the 2021 Regular Session

Dear President Cortez:

Please be advised that I have vetoed Senate Bill 156 of the 2021 Regular Session.

I have vetoed this bill for three important reasons, any of which should be sufficient to prevent this bill from becoming the law of Louisiana. However, the first reason prevails over the others. This bill will not be signed into law because it is targeted, unfairly, at children. This legislation will make life more difficult for children who are going through unique challenges gaining acceptance into their schools, communities, and sometimes even their own families. It should be our role, as leaders in this state, to reach out to and lift up these children, rather than to ostracize them. Moreover, the effect of this bill is not so much about how it would affect athletic events, because it will not (as discussed below). Instead, the real harm of this bill is that it would set as the policy of the State of Louisiana that there is something wrong with these children and that they should be treated differently from whom they really are. All of us are sons and daughters of this great state, and we should do and be better than that.

Secondly, this bill is not a real solution nor is there a real problem. When presented to the legislative committees, there was universal agreement that this issue is not, nor has it ever been, experienced in Louisiana. Indeed, the author of the bill repeatedly admitted as much. Instead, this was a bill that came forth from other states that were attempting to pass, sometimes successfully, similar legislation. In committee testimony, it was made clear that the Louisiana High School Athletics Association (LHSAA) already has policies in place that prevent any unfair advantages in athletic competition.

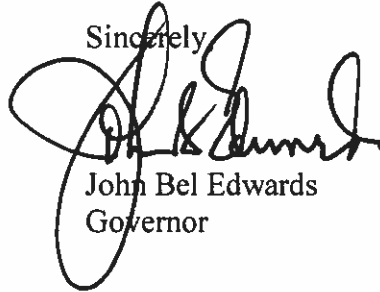
Lastly, it is clear that if this bill were to become law, it would have a major effect on the economy of Louisiana. Many national conventions and conferences have made it clear that they may not select Louisiana as a destination if this bill were to be signed. Further, the National

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Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has suggested that championship events which are scheduled to take place in Louisiana (first up, the 2022 Men's Final Four) could be at risk if this bill becomes law. As Louisiana emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had such a negative effect on the tourism industry, we must be mindful of the crushing blow this legislation could pose to our economy.

I have said many times, and believe in my heart, that discrimination is not a Louisiana value. That remains true and is the basis for my decision to veto this bill. However, I also believe that there are many people who may have supported this bill who are good and decent Louisianans trying to do their best to address a complicated issue. Nevertheless, this bill is not the right approach nor is it the right thing to do.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Bel Edwards". The signature is stylized with large loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

John Bel Edwards  
Governor

cc: Honorable Clay Schexnayder  
Speaker of the House of Representatives

2021 Regular Session

SENATE BILL NO. 156

BY SENATOR MIZELL AND REPRESENTATIVES AMEDEE, BACALA, BAGLEY, BEAULLIEU, BOURRIAQUE, BUTLER, CARRIER, WILFORD CARTER, COUSSAN, CREWS, DESHOTEL, DEVILLIER, EDMONDS, EDMONSTON, EMERSON, FARNUM, FIRMENT, FONTENOT, FRIEMAN, GADBERRY, GAROFALO, GOUDEAU, HARRIS, HODGES, HOLLIS, HORTON, IVEY, MIKE JOHNSON, TRAVIS JOHNSON, MACK, MCCORMICK, MCFARLAND, MCMAHEN, MIGUEZ, MINCEY, ORGERON, CHARLES OWEN, ROBERT OWEN, PRESSLY, RISER, ROMERO, SCHAMERHORN, SCHLEGEL, SEABAUGH, TARVER, THOMAS, THOMPSON, VILLIO, WHEAT AND WRIGHT

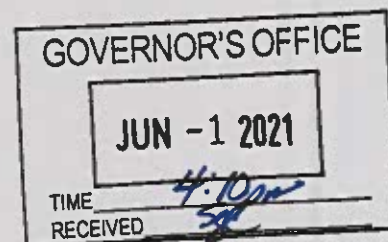
Prefiled pursuant to Article III, Section 2(A)(4)(b)(i) of the Constitution of Louisiana.

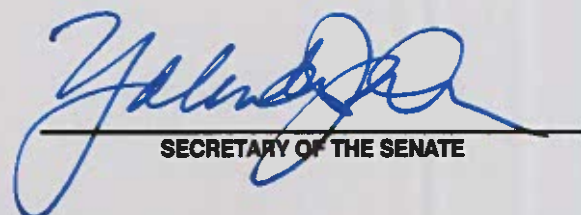


**ORIGINATED**

**IN THE**

**SENATE**



  
SECRETARY OF THE SENATE

SENATE BILL NO. 156

BY SENATOR MIZELL AND REPRESENTATIVES AMEDEE, BACALA, BAGLEY, BEAULLIEU, BOURRIAQUE, BUTLER, CARRIER, WILFORD CARTER, COUSSAN, CREWS, DESHOTEL, DEVILLIER, EDMONDS, EDMONSTON, EMERSON, FARNUM, FIRMENT, FONTENOT, FRIEMAN, GADBERRY, GAROFALO, GOUDEAU, HARRIS, HODGES, HOLLIS, HORTON, IVEY, MIKE JOHNSON, TRAVIS JOHNSON, MACK, MCCORMICK, MCFARLAND, MCMAHEN, MIGUEZ, MINCEY, ORGERON, CHARLES OWEN, ROBERT OWEN, PRESSLY, RISER, ROMERO, SCHAMERHORN, SCHLEGEL, SEABAUGH, TARVER, THOMAS, THOMPSON, VILLIO, WHEAT AND WRIGHT

Prefiled pursuant to Article III, Section 2(A)(4)(b)(i) of the Constitution of Louisiana.

1 AN ACT

2 To enact Chapter 7-A of Title 4 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, to be comprised  
3 of R.S. 4:441 through 446, relative to athletic activities; to require that schools  
4 designate intercollegiate, interscholastic, or intramural athletic teams according to  
5 the biological sex of the team members; to provide that teams designated for females  
6 are not open to participation by biological males; to provide immunity protections  
7 for schools from certain adverse actions; to provide for causes of action; to provide  
8 for legislative findings; to provide for definitions; to provide for remedies; and to  
9 provide for related matters.

10 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

11 Section 1. Chapter 7-A of Title 4 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, to be  
12 comprised of R.S. 4:441 through 446, is hereby enacted to read as follows:

13 **CHAPTER 7-A. FAIRNESS IN WOMEN'S SPORTS ACT**

14 **§441. Short title**

15 **This Chapter shall be known as and may be cited as the "Fairness in**  
16 **Women's Sports Act".**

1           **§442. Legislative findings**

2                   **The legislature finds and declares that:**

3                   **(1) Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, 20 U.S.C. §1681**  
4                   **et seq., was designed to ensure that women are free from discrimination on the**  
5                   **basis of sex in both education and athletics so that women would be afforded the**  
6                   **opportunity to compete for athletic scholarships and to potentially launch their**  
7                   **own athletic careers after they have completed their education.**

8                   **(2) The United States Supreme Court has recognized that there are**  
9                   **'''[i]nherent differences' between men and women''**, and that these differences  
10                   **"remain cause for celebration, but not for denigration of the members of either**  
11                   **sex or for artificial constraints on an individual's opportunity" in *United States***  
12                   ***v. Virginia, et al.*, 518 U.S. 515, 533 (1996).**

13                   **(3) Inherent differences between men and women range from**  
14                   **chromosomal and hormonal differences to physiological differences resulting**  
15                   **in men generally having denser and stronger bones, tendons, and ligaments,**  
16                   **larger hearts, greater lung volume per body mass, a higher red blood cell count,**  
17                   **and higher hemoglobin as well as higher natural levels of testosterone, which**  
18                   **affects traits such as hemoglobin levels, body fat content, the storage and use of**  
19                   **carbohydrates, and the development of Type II muscle fibers, all of which result**  
20                   **in men being able to generate higher speed and power during physical activity.**

21                   **(4) The biological differences between females and males, especially as**  
22                   **they relate to natural levels of testosterone, explain the male and female**  
23                   **secondary sex characteristics which develop during puberty and have lifelong**  
24                   **effects, including those most important for success in sports; categorically, they**  
25                   **are strength, speed, and endurance generally found in greater degrees in**  
26                   **biological males than biological females.**

27                   **(5) While classifications based on sex are generally disfavored, the**  
28                   **United States Supreme Court has recognized that "[S]ex classifications may be**  
29                   **used to compensate women "for particular economic disabilities [they have]**  
30                   **suffered," *Califano v. Webster*, 430 U.S. 313, 320 (1977)(per curiam), to**

1 "promot[e] equal employment opportunity," see *California Fed. Sav. & Loan*  
2 *Assn. v. Guerra*, 479 U.S. 272, 289 (1987), to advance full development of the  
3 talent and capacities of our Nation's people" in *United States v. Virginia, et al.*,  
4 518 U.S. 515, 533-534 (1996).

5 (6) In furtherance of the goals set forth in *United States v. Virginia, et al.*,  
6 518 U.S. at 533-534, one area where sex classifications should allow for the "full  
7 development of the talent and capacities of our Nation's people" is in the area  
8 of sports and athletics.

9 (7) A recent study of female and male Olympic performances found that,  
10 although athletes from both sexes improved over the time span, the "gender  
11 gap" between female and male performances remained stable. These studies  
12 suggest that women's performances at a high level will never match those of  
13 men. The evidence is unequivocal that starting in puberty, in every sport except  
14 sailing, shooting, and riding, there will always be significant numbers of boys  
15 and men who would prevail over the best girls and women in head-to-head  
16 competition. Claims to the contrary are simply a denial of science.

17 (8) Scientific studies have established that the benefits that natural  
18 testosterone provides to male athletes is not diminished through the use of  
19 testosterone suppression. A recent study on the impact of such treatments found  
20 that, even after twelve months of testosterone suppression, the "superior  
21 anthropometric, muscle mass and strength parameters achieved by males at  
22 puberty, and underpinning a considerable portion of the male performance  
23 advantage over females, are not removed".

24 (9) Having separate sex-specific teams furthers efforts to promote sex  
25 equality. Sex-specific teams accomplish this by providing opportunities for  
26 female athletes to demonstrate their skill, strength, and athletic abilities while  
27 also providing them with opportunities to obtain recognition, accolades,  
28 scholarships, better physical and mental health, and the numerous other  
29 long-term benefits that flow from success in athletic endeavors.

30 §443. Definitions



1            In this Chapter, unless otherwise indicated, the following definitions  
2 shall apply:

3            (1) "Postsecondary education board member" means a person who  
4 serves as a board member or officer of a postsecondary education management  
5 board.

6            (2) "Postsecondary education management board" means a board which  
7 governs postsecondary educational institutions, pursuant to R.S. 17:3351.

8            (3) "Schools" means all of the following:

9            (a) A public elementary or secondary school.

10           (b) A nonpublic elementary or secondary school that receives state funds.

11           (c) A public postsecondary educational institution.

12           (d) A nonpublic postsecondary educational institution that receives state  
13 funds.

14           (4) "School coach" means a person who is a coach or assistant coach,  
15 whether paid or on a volunteer basis, of a school intercollegiate, interscholastic,  
16 or intramural athletic team or sporting event.

17           (5) "School board" means a school board or school governing authority  
18 subject to the provisions of R.S. 17:81 or any nonpublic school governing  
19 authority.

20           (6) "School employee" means a person who is employed by a school, a  
21 school board, a postsecondary education management board, or any  
22 postsecondary institution under the authority of a postsecondary education  
23 management board.

24           (7) "School board member" means a person who serves as a board  
25 member or officer for a school board or school governing authority subject to  
26 the provisions of R.S. 17:81 or for any nonpublic school governing authority.

27 §444. Designation of athletic teams

28           A. Intercollegiate, interscholastic, or intramural athletic teams or  
29 sporting events that are sponsored by a school and that receive state funding  
30 shall be expressly designated, based upon biological sex, as only one of the

1 following:

2 (1) Except as provided in Subsection C of this Section, a male, boys', or  
3 men's team or event shall be for those students who are biological males.

4 (2) A female, girls', or women's team or event shall be for those students  
5 who are biological females.

6 (3) A coeducational or mixed team or event shall be open for  
7 participation by biological females and biological males.

8 B. Athletic teams or sporting events designated for females, girls, or  
9 women shall not be open to students who are not biologically female.

10 C. Nothing in this Chapter shall be construed to restrict the eligibility of  
11 any student to participate in any intercollegiate, interscholastic, or intramural  
12 athletic teams or sports designated as "males", "men", or "boys", or designated  
13 as "coed", or "mixed".

14 D. Nothing in this Chapter is intended to prevent any school from  
15 implementing or maintaining a coeducational or mixed athletic team or sporting  
16 event which is open to both biological males and biological females so long as a  
17 female, girls', or women's athletic team or sporting event is not disbanded for  
18 the purpose of creating a coeducational or mixed team or event which would  
19 thereby result to the detriment of students of the female biological sex.

20 §445. Protection of educational institutions; limitation on liability

21 A. No government entity, licensing or accrediting organization, or  
22 athletic association shall entertain a complaint, open an investigation, or take  
23 any other adverse action against a school, school board, or postsecondary  
24 education management board for maintaining a separate intercollegiate,  
25 interscholastic, or intramural athletic team or athletic event reserved for  
26 students of the female biological sex.

27 B. No cause of action may be maintained against any school coach,  
28 school, school board, employee of a school or school board, school board  
29 member, or postsecondary education board member who prohibits a biological  
30 male from participating in a female, girls', or women's athletic team or sporting



1 event pursuant to the requirements of this Chapter.

2 **§446. Remedies; cause of action**

3 **A. A biological female student who is deprived of an athletic opportunity**  
4 **or suffers or is likely to suffer from any direct or indirect harm as a result of a**  
5 **violation of this Chapter may assert that violation as a cause of action for**  
6 **remedies provided for in Subsection D of this Section. Requiring a biological**  
7 **woman to compete against a biological male on a team that is designated as a**  
8 **"female", "girls'", or "women's" team is inherently discriminatory to biological**  
9 **women and is a cognizable harm to biological women under this Chapter.**

10 **B. A biological female student who is subjected to retaliation or other**  
11 **adverse action by a school, athletic association, or other organization as a result**  
12 **of reporting a violation of this Chapter to an employee or representative of the**  
13 **school, athletic association, or to any local, state, or federal agency with**  
14 **oversight of schools shall have a cause of action for remedies provided for in**  
15 **Subsection D of this Section.**

16 **C. A school coach, school, school board, or employee of a school or school**  
17 **board, school board member, or postsecondary education board member who**  
18 **suffers any direct or indirect harm for prohibiting a biological male from**  
19 **participating in a female, girls', or women's athletic team or sporting event**  
20 **pursuant to the requirements of this Chapter shall have a cause of action for**  
21 **remedies provided for in Subsection D of this Section.**

22 **D. Any person who brings a cause of action pursuant to this Chapter**  
23 **may obtain appropriate relief, including but not limited to:**

24 **(1) Injunctive relief, protective order, writ of mandamus or a**  
25 **prohibition, or declaratory relief to prevent any violation of this Chapter.**

26 **(2) Actual damages, reasonable attorney fees, and costs.**

27 **E. All civil actions under this Chapter must be initiated within two years**  
28 **from the date that the harm occurred.**

29 Section 2. If any provision or item of this Act, or the application thereof, is held  
30 invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions, items, or applications of the Act

1 which can be given effect without the invalid provision, item, or application and to this end  
2 the provisions of this Act are hereby declared severable.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

\_\_\_\_\_  
GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

*tmw*  
*06/21/2021*  
