



The Legal Aid Society
EMPLOYMENT LAW CENTER



For Immediate Release

CALIFORNIA SCHOOL AGREES TO TITLE IX COMPLIANCE ***Torrance Unified School District Promises Major Improvements to*** ***Girls' Athletic Facilities and Programs***

TORRANCE, Calif. – **September 8, 2009** -- Students at [West High School](#) in Torrance Calif. will soon see big improvements to girls' athletic programs and softball facilities. [Torrance Unified School District](#) (TUSD) agreed to make the improvements after a complaint that the district was not providing equal participation opportunities and equal treatment and benefits to female students.

"Once the discrepancies were pointed out, we worked with the District and parents to remedy the situation in a timely and cost-efficient manner," stated Ben Egan, West High School principal. "More importantly, we sent a message that *all* our students are valued individuals."

We are all excited about our new sports facilities," said Aletha Vassilakis, a recent Torrance Unified graduate and softball player who brought these issues to the attention of the District. "It feels good to have the school recognize our rights and support our commitment to athletics."

This summer marks the 37th Anniversary of Title IX, the landmark legislation that bans sex discrimination in schools, whether in academics or in athletics. "The agreement reflects the spirit of equality embodied in Title IX. We hope that other school districts will follow Torrance Unified's lead by making a commitment to equal opportunities for female athletes," said [Vicky Barker](#) of the [California Women's Law Center](#).

"Clearly in this economic environment budget issues figure into the timing of improvements," stated Dr. Don Stabler, deputy superintendent of TUSD Administrative Services. "However, the willingness of all parties to work together is resulting in funds being used efficiently to bring girls' softball facilities up to parity with boys' baseball facilities. It's a testament to the school, the District and the parents on how to best serve our students."

The school district is taking many innovative steps to improve the softball facilities and increase girls' participation in sports. "These improvements will have a lasting impact on current and future students at West High School," said Elizabeth Kristen, senior attorney and director of the Title IX K-12 Equality Project at the [Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center](#).

Improvements the school district has agreed to include:

- modifying the softball field to meet the minimum standards of the National Federation of State High School Associations;
- repairing and renovating the bleachers used by the girls' softball team;
- constructing a batting cage for girls' softball;

(more)

- providing gender equity in maintenance of the baseball and softball fields;
- developing a system of funding and awarding trophies and other awards that provides gender equity;
- replacing uniforms in an equitable manner, including providing the same quality and quantity of uniform items for boys and girls, rotated on a comparable schedule;
- assessing the current paid coaching staff, and taking steps to add additional well-qualified coaches for girls' softball as necessary;
- providing comparable publicity for boys' and girls' sports;
- providing equal access to fundraising opportunities for boys and girls;
- adding additional sports and levels to existing girls' sports programs where appropriate;
- training all head coaches, administrators and athletic directors about Title IX and gender equity in athletics.

Kristen explained, "The benefits of participating in school sports go far beyond physical fitness." High school girls who participate in team sports are less likely to drop out of school, smoke, drink, or become pregnant, and are more likely to go to college. The skills gained from sports participation, including teamwork, leadership, and discipline, are crucial as women progress in the corporate world at higher levels than ever before. Eighty percent of female managers of Fortune 500 companies have played organized sports on some level.

The student and her parents were represented by Elizabeth Kristen of the Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center and by Vicky Barker and [Cacilia Kim](#) of the California Women's Law Center.

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About The Legal Aid Society–Employment Law Center

The Legal Aid Society–Employment Law Center, founded in 1916, is committed to protecting the rights and economic self-sufficiency of low-income and disadvantaged workers and their families throughout the Bay Area, California, and nationwide. The LAS-ELC is nationally recognized for its legal advocacy programs that address racial equality; gender equity; immigration and national origin, and disability rights. The LAS-ELC's Title IX K-12 Equality Project is dedicated to improving athletic opportunities for young women. The Title IX Project seeks to achieve change through advice, counseling and advocacy that creates enduring precedents and enforces existing law.

About California Women's Law Center

Since its founding in 1989, the California Women's Law Center has worked in collaboration with others to defend, secure and advance the comprehensive civil rights of women and girls. CWLC has unparalleled expertise in strategies to protect women's rights with programs to empower individuals to use the law to address the societal and legal issues that perpetuate ongoing gender inequity, women's health issues, reproductive justice and violence against women.