



Written by [Staff](#) on March 26, 2024

Published in the April 15, 2024 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 40, No. 07

Inside Track

Riley Gaines Sues NCAA Over Transgender Policies



(AP Images)

Former University of Kentucky swimmer Riley Gaines is suing the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) for allowing transgender athletes to compete in women's sports.

She and 15 current and former college athletes filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia on March 14, according to The Associated Press.

Gaines said they had been working on it "diligently and strategically" for some time. Last year, they sent a letter threatening legal action unless the NCAA allowed only female-born athletes in women's sports.

In addition to the NCAA, the lawsuit names several schools within the University of Georgia system. It accuses them of violating Title IX protections and rights to bodily privacy, not only making women compete against biological males, but also forcing them to share a locker room.

Gaines and her colleagues assert that the NCAA's transgender participation policy undermines women's sports, and are asking for an injunction against the defendants. Their goal is to "secure for future generations of women the promise of Title IX that is being denied them and other college women."

The action amounts to yet another pushback against the NCAA over this issue. The controversy reached a pitch when the organization backed the University of Pennsylvania's Lia Thomas (a biological male), who won a women's Division I national championship in 2022. The event was hosted by Georgia Tech, which is why the University of Georgia system is named in the lawsuit. Gaines tied with Thomas in the 200 freestyle final at the 2022 event, but the NCAA awarded the trophy to Thomas.

AP quoted the NCAA on March 14: "College sports are the premier stage for women's sports in America, and while the NCAA does not comment on pending litigation, the Association and its members will continue to promote Title IX, make unprecedented investments in women's sports and ensure fair competition in all NCAA championships."

In 2022 the NCAA "revised its policies on transgender athlete participation to attempt to align with national sports governing bodies," according to AP.



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— *Rebecca Terrell*

Power Company Acknowledges Role in Texas Fire



(Joint Base San Antonio/Flickr)

The Smokehouse Creek Fire, which started on February 26 and by mid-March had burned nearly 1,700 square miles in the Texas Panhandle and into western Oklahoma, looks as if it might have been caused by downed power lines operated by utility provider Xcel Energy.

The Associated Press reported on March 7 that Xcel acknowledged its downed lines were likely responsible for igniting the fire, admitting in a statement, “Xcel Energy has been cooperating with the investigations into the wildfires and has been conducting its own review. Based on currently available information, Xcel Energy acknowledges that its facilities appear to have been involved in an ignition of the Smokehouse Creek fire.”

One lawsuit against Xcel, filed on behalf of a Stinnett, Texas, homeowner, claims the fire started “when a wooden pole defendants failed to properly inspect, maintain and replace, splintered and snapped off at its base.” “As a result of the utility, powered utility lines hit the ground, igniting a fire, which spread quickly into an uncontrollable conflagration ... which incinerated the nearby town of Canadian,” the lawsuit states.

South Carolina’s ABC affiliate reported on March 9 that at least five additional suits have been filed against Xcel Energy, Southwestern Public Service (SPS) Company, and Osmose Utilities Services alleging similar mishandling of power lines in the area.

One states that “an old, rotten utility pole, owned and operated by the Defendant Xcel and/or SPS and located northwest of Stinnett, Texas, broke off below ground level and fell toward the ground. The electrical conductors attached to that fallen pole then contacted the ground, causing an electrical fault and arcing that ignited the Smokehouse Creek Fire.”

Interestingly, although Xcel “disputes claims that it acted negligently in maintaining and operating its infrastructure,” it has nonetheless encouraged those directly affected by the fire to file a claim with them. “We will review and respond to any such claims in an expeditious manner, with a priority on claims from any person that lost their home in the Smokehouse Creek fire.”



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— *James Murphy*

Parents Upset by School's Secret LGBTQ Club



(Nikada/iStock/Getty Images Plus)

On March 5, Sacramento's CBS13 reported that parents "feel like they were kept in the dark about an LGBTQ+ club they said a third-grade teacher started" at their children's school.

According to the California Family Council (CFC), early this school year, Daniel Bishop, a third-grade teacher at Elk Grove Unified School District's (EGUSD) Pleasant Grove Elementary School, "was allowed to personally invite all the 3rd through 6th-grade classes to a new LGBTQ club he was starting. The 'UBU Club' as he called it, was for 'boys who crush on boys' and 'girls who crush on girls,' but anyone could come, the kids were told. Yet parents weren't told anything about the club. No notification in the school newsletter and no permission slips were required for attendance."

When parents learned of the club in January, they questioned school officials, continued CFC. "They were told LGBTQ clubs had already been started in 5 to 10 other elementary schools. They also discovered school officials weren't sure students needed parent permission to attend an LGBTQ club. But the UBU club was put on hold until the school officials got legal advice. That was on January 29. Tired of waiting for answers, parents took their complaints and questions to the [EGUSD's March 5] meeting."

At that meeting, one parent commented that, although "the district has ignored concerned parents for weeks, [it] recently sent a flier to all district teachers, inviting them to a training on how to respond to resistance from parents against LGBTQ clubs."

Another said that school staff "betrayed the trust of parents when they held this UBU club during lunchtime and did not notify parents or require permission slips for the club."

Perhaps the staff were following the California Teachers Association's (CTA) advice. In 2021, the CTA was caught on leaked video instructing members how to start in-school LGBTQ clubs without parents' knowledge, with a first-grade teacher explicitly stating, "It's best to hold meetings for gender identity clubs during lunchtime, so the parents never know."

— *Michael Tennant*



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No A/C in Paris Olympics Athlete Housing?



(gorodenkoff/iStock/Getty Images Plus)

Athletes at the 2024 Summer Olympic Games in Paris could face more than just the world-class competition the games are certain to feature. Because of the French capital's desire to host the "greenest ever" Olympic games, athletes might have to bed down in stifling hot rooms, because Paris has decided to do without air conditioning in the athlete housing.

Reuters reported on March 13 that, instead of those carbon-spewing air conditioners, hot athletes will need to rely on a system utilizing underground water to cool the rooms. In addition, the buildings housing athletes will be oriented in a way that avoids direct sunlight, which hopefully will keep the rooms cooler.

Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo assured Olympians that all will be well, despite last summer's four heat waves that led to the fourth-hottest summer on record in France. "This village was designed to avoid the need for air conditioning, even in very, very high temperatures," she said.

Some Olympic delegations aren't willing to go without air conditioning, though, even if it is for the climate's sake. The Australian Olympic Committee (AOC), for instance, doesn't want to bet on unproven, climate-friendly engineering to keep their athletes cool, so they're bringing \$100,000 worth of air conditioners to France.

"[These are] high-performance Games," said AOC CEO Matt Carroll. "We're not going for a picnic.... Athletes have got to sleep during the day, because their events are at night [and] daytime will be when it's hottest."

Teams from Canada, Greece, and Ireland will also be bringing their own portable A/C units to Paris. Even the Paris Organizing Committee appears to understand the concerns, as they will be offering portable units for rent.

Athletes from more than 200 nations from all over the globe come to compete in the Olympics. Isn't that a lot of carbon-emitting jet travel? The Olympics are not a necessity. Why don't Mayor Hidalgo and the organizers of the Paris Olympics make a grand gesture in the name of the climate and cancel them altogether?



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