



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on July 10, 2019

Sen. Manchin's Blackmail: Block Funding for World Cup Until Women's Team Gets Equal Pay

In a sane world, female soccer players' cries for pay equality would elicit a simple response: Want the men's money? Try out for, and succeed in, the men's arena. In our world, however, a politician cries along with them and proposes a bill designed to trump market forces and give us equality — the situational variety, anyway.



In the wake of the U.S. women's soccer team's second straight World Cup championship, Senator Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) has "introduced a bill that would prevent any federal funds from being used toward the 2026 World Cup in the United States until the U.S. Soccer Federation agrees to provide equitable pay to the men's and women's national teams," a [press release](#) from his office explains.

"This would include any and all funds provided to host cities; participating local and state organizations; the U.S. Soccer Federation, Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF), and Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA)."

Female soccer players have long been agitating for equal pay. In fact, earlier this year the U.S. women's team filed a sex-discrimination lawsuit "against the U.S. Soccer Federation that alleges they receive [far less money](#) than the men's team despite producing superior results," [reports](#) the *Week*.

Interesting. Does doing better in a lesser realm constitute "superior results"? If so, then an under-15 junior team that dominates its competition far more than any pro teams dominate theirs would also be "producing superior results." Should such a junior team, then, not only be paid, but more than the pros?

Tangential to this, our women's national team [actually lost](#) to under-15 boys, an FC Dallas academy squad, 5-2 in 2017. That would be 14-year-olds, mind you — and maybe some 13-year-olds, too.

Oh, note also that women's pro teams lose to young teen boys all the time, [another example being](#) Australia's national team's 2016 defeat by an under-15 squad.

This brings us to how Senator Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), always ready to value signal on matters he knows nothing about, said of the pay disparity, "The women make just as much of a sacrifice, put in just as much mental and physical energy, absorb just as much risk of injury as the men who play for our national team." (By the way, doesn't the guy picking up trash in summer heat work as hard as a New York senator?)

It also brings us to how Manchin's bill was catalyzed by a letter sent to him by West Virginia University's head women's soccer coach, Nikki Izzo-Brown. "I believe ... it is wrong for the US Soccer



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women to be paid and valued less for their work because of gender,” she [wrote](#).

Yet the teen boys also sacrifice, exert energy, and risk injury, and is it right to be paid and valued less for work because of your age? Perhaps the lads should lobby for the women’s money.

Or perhaps we should just apply reason. Consider: If discussing how lightweight boxers are paid considerably less than heavyweights, would it be rational to claim they were “valued less for their work” because of their weight? Or is there another reason?

And when male fashion models make markedly less than their female counterparts, does anyone complain of sex discrimination?

In reality, athletes’ compensation is not based on sacrifice, energy exertion, or injury risk, as I — a former professional sportsman (tennis) known for his work ethic — can painfully attest. Nor is it determined by how effective or good you are; were it otherwise, the high-level teen lads would outearn the women. (Note: In the 800-meter run, the best time for 14-year-old boys surpasses the women’s world record.)

In fact, while coach Izzo-Brown’s letter trumpeted the women’s winning record, pay isn’t even based on titles won. No, there’s only one kind of performance relevant here: how well you please the market.

This is why more money is commanded by heavyweight boxers and female fashion models — and male soccer players. As the [Federalist’s](#) John Glynn puts it, “Yes, the women [soccer players] are indeed ‘No. 1 in the world,’ but they’re number one in women’s sports, which has far fewer fans and plays far fewer games.”

In fact, the women already benefit from an affirmative-action-actuated pay *advantage*. As Glynn also informs, “Last year, the men’s World Cup generated \$6 billion, and gave about 7 percent to the teams. The 2019 Women’s World Cup made \$131 million, and gave out more than 20 percent to the teams.”

Of course, this is nothing compared to the WNBA: It [has lost at least \\$10 million every year](#) of its existence — which continues only because the NBA [subsidizes](#) the league.

Then there’s the kicker. A lightweight boxer complaining about not getting the big guys’ money just might be told, “If you want the heavyweights’ purses, fight in their class.” *Voila!*

While equal pay arguments are always fallacious, at least women compete against men in medicine, law, science, teaching, and most other endeavors. In sports, however, women benefit from a separate arena that’s protected from — and discriminates against via exclusion — the best competition: men. Of course, this gets at why women’s athletics isn’t as marketable: It’s an inferior product.

Yet while no politician will take up the cudgels for male fashion models or lightweight boxers, I’m quite sure lightweight legislators will eventually mandate equal pay in soccer. For we can have market-based determinations when they favor women (or other politically fashionable groups); otherwise, the market be damned.

It’s situational equality, American style.

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