



media information

1661 ramblewood drive • east lansing, mi 48823 • 517.332.5046 • fax - 517.332.4071 • www.mhsaa.com

MEDIA ADVISORY

November 30, 2000

Contact: John Johnson or Jack Roberts

517.332.5046 or www.mhsaa.com

Gender Equity Litigation Update

This information is provided to media attending the 2000 MHSAA Girls Basketball Semifinals and Finals in response to questions and the prevalence of misinformation.

1. The case filed in June 1998 has been neither won nor lost. A trial date has not been set.
2. The central issue of the litigation is the time of year chosen by schools years ago for conducting interscholastic sports seasons, with most attention focusing on girls basketball and volleyball being conducted in the fall and winter, respectively, which is not the case in most other states.
3. Michigan's sports seasons have passed legal review on several occasions:
 - In 1984, the US Office for Civil Rights issued its findings that the scheduling of sports seasons in Michigan does not discriminate against females.
 - In 1973, 1975 and 1992, the Michigan Department of Civil Rights dismissed for no cause of action under Title IX cases brought by groups which challenged the sports seasons schedule of high schools in Michigan.
4. Support for the Michigan schedule remains solid:
 - On six occasions since 1973, the MHSAA membership has been surveyed; and on each occasion by overwhelming majority votes, schools have favored the Michigan model.
 - Most recently (May 1998) the Michigan schedule was favored by more than 82 percent of responding schools, including more than 75 percent of schools with female administrators participating in the survey.
 - A survey of female athletes in 1999 documented that more than two-thirds oppose realignment of high school seasons to coincide with college seasons.
5. The MHSAA will continue a vigorous defense of the policies and procedures so strongly supported by schools and students. It will do so in spite of these obstacles:
 - During a deposition of a school administrator, when plaintiffs' counsel did not get answers she was seeking, she threatened to sue local school districts if she didn't prevail over the MHSAA in this case.

(over)

2-2-2 – Gender Equity Litigation Update

- One and two years after filing the lawsuit, plaintiffs’ counsel was continuing to make factual allegations she knew were not true.
- The court repeatedly has allowed plaintiffs to miss deadlines and elude specific court instructions.
- The court’s interim order denying defendants’ motion to dismiss is at odds with controlling judicial precedent and may subject the MHSAA to an expensive trial that would proceed on faulty law of the case.
- The federal district court judge in this case is the same one who removed himself for an inability to be impartial in a similar case 15 years before this case was assigned to his court.

The MHSAA is a private, not-for-profit corporation of voluntary membership by over 1,300 public and private senior high schools and junior high/middle schools which exists to develop common rules for athletic eligibility and competition. No government funds or tax dollars support the MHSAA, which was the first such association nationally to not accept membership dues or tournament entry fees from schools. Member schools which enforce these rules are permitted to participate in MHSAA tournaments which attract approximately 1.6 million spectators each year.

-0-

RL01-033

Farm Bureau Insurance & Little Caesars Pizza are year-round MHSAA Corporate Partners