

Valley 101 says 'let her play': 50 years of Title IX through an Arizona lens

By Kaely Monahan

Victoria Jackson [00:00:00] I was the title nine baby in the sense that the law was passed a decade before I was born.

Sr. Lynn Winsor [00:00:11] So there's been a lot of changes since I was high school girl.

Unidentified [00:00:16] [Sports Montage]

KM [00:00:46] This year, Title nine. The law that prohibits sex discrimination in schools turns 50. The landmark legislation has become synonymous with women's sports in addition to affecting education across the board.

Female Athletes Montage [00:01:07] I was a Title nine baby. I'm part of the first generation of American women to ever step on the field representing their university in varsity sports, one of the first to get a full ride scholarship. When I was in college and I was the manager of the women's soccer team and I was the PA announcer of the field hockey team and the women's lacrosse team, that was really the basis of my career why I'm sitting here today. It's very embarrassing that. Most people don't know what title is, I mean, I'm just I'm cringing.

KM [00:01:41] Welcome to the Valley 101a podcast by the Arizona Republic and AC Central dot com. Each week we explore the stories and questions you have about Metro, Phenix and beyond. I'm Kaylee Monahan, your producer. Today we're peering into the history of Title nine through an Arizona lens. We'll hear from those who've seen its passage, implemented it and benefited from it. On June 23rd, 1972, President Richard Nixon signed the Title Nine Amendment into law. It states that no person be excluded from participating in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination on the basis of sex under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance should any educational institution be found in violation? It would lose federal money. In brief, the amendment outlaws sex discrimination in educational institutions. While sports is not specifically mentioned. The amendment has permanently altered the course of women's athletics. My interest in Title Nine is personal, but not in the way you might assume. I was never an athlete in the traditional sense unless you count Irish step dancing. My interest in women's sports was piqued by a story I did earlier this year. Some of you regular listeners might recall the episode on Ina Giddings, Arizona's grandmother of women's sports. It was through her that I was introduced to the colorful and inspiring stories of Arizona sportswomen. Arizona has always been on the starting line of women's sports. One of the women who is part of that history is a nun, Sister Lyn Windsor, who we heard at the opening of this episode. She's been at Xavier College Prep's athletics since 1974. She is also a Xavier alumna. During her time as a student, there were only about 100 girls in her class, and as a student she was already very engaged in various sports.

Sr. Lynn Winsor [00:04:02] We did have sports. It wasn't a Arizona Interscholastic Association. It was like a little Catholic group. I mean, we played Saint Joseph's Academy in Tucson, Saint Joseph's in Prescott, Saint Mary's, and just, you know, a few other schools.

KM [00:04:16] This was during the late 1950s, well before Title nine. Sister Lynn graduated from Xavier in 1961, attended Arizona State University, then worked a few years before entering the convent.

Sr. Lynn Winsor [00:04:29] By the time I came back here in 1974, Xavier had joined the air, I think it was in the late sixties, and I took over as athletic administrator in 1977. So lots of things have changed since then, and I think I've gotten to see a lot of it because I think probably the oldest serving athletic administrator in Arizona.

KM [00:04:47] She credits her success as an athletic director and coach to the many people who gave her opportunities.

Sr. Lynn Winsor [00:04:54] Of course, I think sometimes being a sister helps you. So I really started out with a very nice group of gentlemen that was very few women athletic directors back then. Then Ziggy Switkowski from the Moon Valley. He called me up one time in 1981. He said, Sister Lynn, I think we should start an athletic administrators association for Arizona because we hadn't have won a lot of the other states had them. So he said, I will be the Treasurer. And I said, Well, I'll be the secretary and let's put someone from a small school as president. And I thought right then and there that was a good move because we want to incorporate everybody. But I was still the only woman.

KM [00:05:38] These were the early years of Title nine, and many schools across the country were either slow to adopt the changes the law required or resistant to them. Part of what Sister Lynn and her colleagues did as athletic administrators was to inspect schools and make sure they were up to code with Title nine. She shared one story in particular that is one of her favorites. A small school in northern Arizona filled out an application to get reviewed for Title nine infractions. Its athletic director knew that they were lacking, and by having Sister Lynn and the other regulators visit, they could get recommendations on how to better things for the girls.

Sr. Lynn Winsor [00:06:16] So we got to the school and we drive up and we talk to the coaches and they said they really didn't have a lot. The girls coaches and then we got the girls and they said we had a where the boys old boys, J.V. baseball uniforms where I saw Piper. I mean, they had a list. They had no locker rooms. They had a change in the beds. They had nothing.

KM [00:06:32] The recommendations were written and sent to the school, and within two years, the athletic director and his school were able to implement all of them. Sister Lynn credits this to that director's foresight. He wanted to get help for his female athletes, and he did it. Access to equal facilities, equipment and opportunities is a huge part of Title nine. One famous example of this fight for equal access came from the women's rowing team at Yale in 1976. The women's team stormed their athletic director's office to protest the lack of locker room facilities for the women. 19 of them stripped, exposing the phrase Title nine, written in blue marker on their bodies. The future Olympian, Kris Ernst, read this statement.

Trailer Clip [00:07:28] These are the bodies Yale is exploiting. On a day like today. The ice freezes on this skin and we sit for a half hour as the ice melts and soaks through to meet the sweat that is soaking us from the inside.

KM [00:07:42] That is a snippet from the trailer A Hero for Daisy, which chronicles that story.

Victoria Jackson [00:07:52] Hi, I'm Victoria Jackson. I'm a clinical assistant professor of history at Arizona State University.

KM [00:07:58] Victoria is an athlete herself, competing in track and field for the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and Arizona State. She is also the PAC ten conference champion at 5000 meters, the NCAA national champion for the Sun Devils at 10,000 meters, and a professional runner endorsed by Nike. We also heard her voice at the beginning of this story.

Victoria Jackson [00:08:23] So I grew up in suburban Chicago in a school district with a lot of resources with a woman athletic director. And my high school had lots and lots of sporting opportunities for girls. The 96 Atlanta Olympics and the 99 World Cup bookended my high school years, so I thought all of this was settled. We'd arrived. We have it made. Everybody cares about girls and women in sport and isn't that awesome? You know, my peers and I, we played sports all of the time. I grew up playing games, you know, kind of unorganized games that you could call sports with friends in my community all through my childhood. And it was mixed gender play. Boys and girls were playing together.

KM [00:09:14] Victoria explained that she was fortunate growing up in a positive sports environment. It wasn't until college that she was exposed to what inequality in women's sports looked like.

Victoria Jackson [00:09:28] I was a national class runner from my freshman year of high school on going to national meets and was heavily recruited and I was a multi-sport athlete until I specialized in running mid-way through high school. And what I learned during my time as a Tar Heel, thanks to being on a track and field team, which is very diverse, I had teammates from all sorts of socioeconomic and racial backgrounds. Was that my idyllic experience in high school was not what they had. I mean, I had an athletic director who read through the Title nine regulations and made sure that the boys and girls basketball teams were rotating practice spaces so that we each had equitable access to the best court facilities and the best times for practice. And I thought all schools were doing that and going to unci and being on a track team in the South with teammates from all over the country. I started learning a lot.

KM [00:10:31] Let's go back to the law itself. Title nine prohibits sex based discrimination in any school or any other educational program that receives funding from the federal government. And it began not necessarily with sports in mind, but with equality in educational institutions. Victoria shared this story about the roots of the amendment.

Victoria Jackson [00:10:53] A woman like me who was not an athlete but was like me academically, is the reason behind the work to get this legislation written. And that woman was Bunny Sandler beneath Sandler, who, like me, was a Ph.D. student at her university and wanted to be hired into a tenure track position at her university. It was the University of Maryland, and the faculty was majority male, and in her class of graduate students, the men were getting jobs like that, like without even having to interview, they were getting tenure track jobs. And she noticed the women weren't. And so there were openings at her university and, you know, she couldn't move. She had a family and children. She couldn't just pick everyone up and go anywhere, chasing tenure, track jobs. She asked a friend who is on the faculty and of course, a man because they were all men. Why am I not getting any feedback? I applied for this and it's like crickets. I don't understand what's going on. And he told her, Oh, come on, Bunny, you know, you come on too strong for a

woman. And she didn't really have an understanding and most women did not have an understanding of what discrimination was. In the early 1970s that it was just this is how the way things are.

KM [00:12:22] Well, he didn't see it that way. She began to thoroughly research the Civil Rights Act of 1964. And from that, she realized there was a framework that could be used to protect women in employment, in academia. But remember, there was no law at this time that made women a protected category in education circles. And that's part of what Title nine does to.

Victoria Jackson [00:12:51] Sorry. Right. So she starts working with various women's rights and women's law, nonprofit advocacy groups, and Patsy Mink and Edith Green and the House of Representatives. Because, of course, there were no women in the Senate, in the House. Those two really lead the charge. Edith Green holds hearings on women in Higher Education in 1970. Patsy Mink writes the bill and is really the main author and champion of that. And Birch Bayh, the senator from Indiana, is who leads this fight in the Senate side. You know, it's employment and higher education story first. But then the overall effect, that grievance driving the equal opportunity for girls and women in education is what revolutionizes both education and especially higher education in the United States.

KM [00:14:00] We're going to take a quick break now.

Amanda Luberto [00:14:11] Hi. This is Amanda Luberto, the other podcast producer. Did you know there's an easy way to stay on top of all of our podcasts? Plus news from across the state. Just download the free AC Central App. Find it in your app store and in Google Play. Now back to the story.

KM [00:14:38] It seems like a no brainer that women should be able to play sports and have equal opportunities to be athletes. When you ask girls and women why they like sports, you'll often hear.

Amanda Luberto [00:14:49] Well, we like it because it's fun.

KM [00:14:51] This is Sister Lynn again.

Amanda Luberto [00:14:52] That is the number one answer. Nationally, the kids say they like being on a team, they like having fun, they like making friends, and then winning is nice. And that's exactly what the kids said because, you know, you have friendships for life. I think that's really important and having fun.

KM [00:15:06] And according to the Women's Sports Foundation, 93% of girls ages 7 to 13 say they like or even love to play sports. And of those who love to play three quarters plan to continue playing in high school and beyond, Sister Lynn says that girls interest in sports is still growing. And at Xavier, they keep adding more and more programs.

Amanda Luberto [00:15:33] We have crew and rowing and lacrosse. We started a mountain biking team and then, of course, we got the e-sports archery shooting. We've added all these activities because girls like to be involved, they like to make friends and they want to have fun. So we have a lot of we have 75 clubs here. This is another cute story. How pickleball do you play pickleball?

KM [00:15:57] I don't, but I want to.

Sr. Lynn Winsor [00:15:59] Let me tell you, it's very up and coming, you know, being out there and reading and everything. I said, okay, we just redid our tennis courts last year and then, by the way, we're going to put pickleball lines on it. What? I said, yeah, pickleball lines, you know, because it's becoming very popular. I know the tennis people in originally weren't too excited about it, but now they've joined them because it's a good activity for kids.

KM [00:16:26] So what does the future of Title nine look like after 50 years? It may feel like to some that equality in sports has been achieved, but we're not fully there yet. In 2021, University of Oregon basketball player Sedona Prince shot a TikTok video that showed in detail the glaring inequality between the men's and women's weight rooms for teams in the NCAA basketball tournament. And it went viral.

Sedona Prince [00:16:54] I got something to show y'all. So for the NCAA, March Madness, the biggest tournament in college basketball for women. This is our weight room. Let me show you all the men's weight room.

KM [00:17:05] The women's weight room, if it can be called that, is a single A-frame rack of weights behind a curtain next to their practice court. The men's weight room, however, is an entire room filled with a variety of weights and benches.

Sedona Prince [00:17:21] Now, only pictures of our weight room got released versus the men's NCAA came out with a statement saying that it wasn't money, it was space. That was a problem. Let me show you something else. Here's our practice court. Right? And then here's that weight room and then here's all this extra space. If you are upset about this problem, then you're a part of it.

KM [00:17:46] Outside of the obvious injustice. Victoria says that this is also about being and feeling legitimized as an athlete if you have less than the men. How does that make an athlete view herself? How does that make society view her? Lesser facilities not only hinder female athletes, but it also degrades them.

Victoria Jackson [00:18:14] So Sedona Prince was doing what women in the seventies were doing when they'd go to their athletic director and say, you know, the women's gym isn't even regulation. And our star player just broke her arm crashing into the wall because of it. Like, we deserve better.

KM [00:18:36] Another aspect that still needs serious work is the broadcasting of women's sports. Billions of dollars are poured into NCAA sports, TV deals, and the majority still goes towards men's coverage.

Victoria Jackson [00:18:49] We can get into these circular arguments, right? Those who get defensive or resist this effort to get more women's sports on TV say, well, it's not as popular. So it's the money drain. And if it's not as popular, we're not going to be able to sell the ad space. But these are ideas without any sort of analysis or data behind them. The NCAA was undervaluing and underselling the media rights to broadcasting the women's basketball tournament. Media expert his research shows that that tournament is worth at least 80, but probably closer to \$110 million a year. And that the rights for that tournament right now are thrown in with 28 other championships or \$34 million a year. And so it's an example of how when you tell yourself women's sports are a money drain and nobody wants to watch them on TV, you go and sit down at the negotiating table and undersell

them. And you're contributing to this perception that they're a money drain and nobody wants to watch them. But if you look at the viewership rates, women's college sports championships often outperform the men's, with the exception of men's basketball and football bowl games. Women's sports are typically outperforming their counterpart in sports.

Trailer Clip [00:20:18] The more eyes. The more eyes, the more legs, the more legs, the more tweets, more tweets, more fans and more fans for more seats. A full house means more noise. My head's getting turned. More cameras, more and more pundits, more press. More headlines, more air time, more billboards, more big time. More sponsors, more sheets, more signature beats. My little shirts and my little leagues. With big dreams of Golden Globes, of golden bows. Well done, kid. More seeing them win in debt. Most. They're playing more. Keep up more pitches, open more. Try out more. Future champs for teams to score. My speech to referee. More story tellers help us see. More coaches craft in how we play. More decision makers forge the way. We all rise. With more eyes.

KM [00:21:52] Now the debate on many people's minds is how to include transgender athletes. Penn State swimmer Leah Thomas made headlines after she transitioned from male to female and competed on the women's swim team. Heated conversations broke out as she crushed her competition. Is it fair to have her compete against female born women when she transitioned after puberty? Victoria says participation by transgender athletes was not even an issue for the NCAA. Until recently.

Victoria Jackson [00:22:24] The answer had transgender policies in place for over a decade. In line with this kind of understanding of it being a civil right. You know, it wasn't that you could just compete in whatever category you said you were. You needed to prove you needed to be on hormones for a certain number of years if you were a transgender woman competing. And that worked. It worked for a decade.

KM [00:22:52] So what changed?

Victoria Jackson [00:22:53] We're in a moment where NCAA, a sports and the colleges who compete in the highest level of NCAA sports are being told by the three branches of government that you can't get away with calling this amateur anymore if it means you're violating antitrust law. And so there's a tension here. The college sports are educational, and that becomes conflated with this idea of amateur. Amateur sports don't exist anywhere else in the world anymore because the Olympic movement abandoned amateurism. So when that happened, college sports in the United States, amateur kind of became conflated with education. And it's also run like a big business. And so there's a tension there. The other context here is that the International Olympic Committee put out new transgender guidelines coming off the Tokyo 2021 Olympic Games, saying these transgender policies, we're kicking it to the federations. Now, the international federations. So transgender policies need to be determined in a sport by sport manner, which meant the International Federation for Swimming was in the place of having to come up with their own transgender guidelines. So that is the context in which the NCAA decided to drop the policy it had had in place for a decade. And to say, we're following the IOC now.

KM [00:24:31] An amendment like Title nine is not set in stone. It is vulnerable to whoever is in the White House. The Joe Biden administration restored the definition of transgender people within the context of Title nine, which means they are protected by it. But another administration could just as easily rewrite the definitions and change the interpretation of the law, thereby changing who it protects. So as we remember and honor the trailblazers

of both past and present who helped create and implement Title nine, we must also ask ourselves, how do we define equality? What does it look like in 2022 and beyond? As I close this story, I want to leave you with the words of Patsy Mink, the House representative from poverty, and first woman of color to serve in Congress, and one of the main authors of Title nine, which has been renamed in her honor.

Patsy Mink [00:25:38] It's always been my belief that no matter how many laws we passed or how many constitutional amendments we were successful in having ratified that the major problem in any society was the attitudes that people grew up with or were made to believe were sacred traditions of their civilization. And so long as any part of our society adheres to a sexist notion that men should do certain things and women should do certain things, and then begin to inculcate our babies with these notions through curriculum development and so forth, then we'll never be rid of the basic causes of sex discrimination.

KM [00:26:55] If you like this story, I encourage you to go back and listen to our other episodes. You can find value one on one wherever you subscribe to your podcasts. And if you want to hear more about trailblazing women in sports, check out our episode on Zena Giddings. And this podcast is made possible by you, our listeners. We rely on your curiosity about Phenix and beyond. Submit your questions to Valley 1 to 1 at A-Z Central Icon. You can also support this and all the work we do by subscribing to AC Central dot com. I'm producer Kaylee Monahan. Until next time, I'll be out on the pickleball court.