# Government Audit Reveals Significant Delays in U.S. Department of Education's Title IX Compliance for College Athletics



A recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) audit has highlighted significant delays by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in addressing Title IX compliance issues in college athletics. Title IX is a federal law that prohibits gender discrimination in educational programs receiving federal funds. The GAO report evaluated 26 college Title IX compliance cases, revealing that OCR took over a year to respond in ten cases, with delays extending beyond five years in five instances. These delays have reportedly hindered colleges' attempts to promptly address gender equity concerns.

The report cited specific cases where colleges struggled due to OCR’s lack of timely communication. For example, one college experienced a nearly seven-year delay in resolving a women's softball team's facilities and coaching disparities compared to the men's baseball team. Another college hesitated to upgrade women's athletic facilities because OCR had not provided feedback on compliance issues for over two years. Additionally, a college delayed adding a new women's sport due to waiting for OCR’s approval, resulting in a 10-month recruiting delay for a new coach.

The Education Department acknowledged the delays and cited resource constraints as a contributing factor. Advocates argue that the OCR has been underfunded, with staffing remaining low despite an increase in complaints over the years. President Biden's 2025 budget proposal includes a $22 million increase for OCR, but this falls short of the doubled funding advocates believe is necessary.

Title IX's influence on collegiate and professional women's sports is significant, but gender and racial disparities persist. The GAO report arrives at a time when opportunities for college athletes are expanding due to new rules allowing athletes to profit from their name, likeness, and image (NIL).

Simultaneously, a new federal rule on Title IX, which broadens protections to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, has prompted lawsuits from at least two dozen Republican-controlled states. These states argue that the rule could compel them to allow transgender athletes to compete according to their gender identity. Although the rule does not specifically mention transgender athletes, GOP officials claim it implicitly demands compliance, fearing it might threaten fairness in competition.

The Education Department has not given a timeline for finalizing the athletics policy as it addresses over 150,000 public comments. The rule's future is uncertain as multiple federal circuit courts will decide on the pending challenges.