STATES MOVE TO BAN TRANS KIDS FROM SPORTS

SAMI EL-HAJJAR • age 11

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epublicans in Idaho, and others in primarily conservative states, have been targeting trans youth. Idaho and several other states have been pushing bills and legislation that prohibit trans youth athletes from competing on teams that identify with their gender.

Lawmakers in at least 30 states have introduced legislation to ban transgender athletes from high school and college women’s teams. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said at a press conference after passing the anti-transgender legislation, “In Florida, girls are going to play girls’ sports, and boys are going to play boys’ sports.” Many people are worried about the ramifications.

Alphonso David, president of the Human Rights Campaign, explained in an interview with the New York Times that these bills have significant consequences for transgender youth. “When you tell a transgender child or teenager that their identity is in their head—that it’s imaginative, it’s not real—it has significant collateral consequences,” said David.

To date, there are still no conclusive studies which suggest that transgender girls outperform cisgender girls. A lawsuit was filed against the Connecticut Association of Schools by the families of three cisgender girls upset about transgender girls participating on their track team. Two days after the lawsuit was filed, one of the cisgender girls outperformed one of the transgender girls on the team. “Attempts to force transgender girls to play on the boys’ teams are unconscionable attacks on already marginalized transgender children, and they don’t address a real problem,” said Jack Turban, a fellow in child and adolescent psychiatry at the Stanford University School of Medicine, in an opinion piece in Scientific American.

Many people are advocating for inclusivity when it comes to sports. Dr. Eric Vilain, a geneticist who studies sex differences in athletes, reported to NPR that sports are about inclusivity and setting goals, not competition. “[The rules] still need to be inclusive, or at least not come up with arguments that are not based in science.”

Recently, President Biden signed an executive order that allows transgender girls to compete on women’s teams that received federal funding. The bill Idaho is proposing could be viewed as unconstitutional because it violates this executive order. Yet many governors, including Kristi Noem of South Dakota and Asa Hutchinson of Arkansas, are still trying to get their bills passed. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has also condemned such bills, stating on their website that “[the NCAA Board of Governors firmly and unequivocally supports the opportunity for transgender student-athletes to compete in college sports. This commitment is grounded in our values of inclusion and fair competition.”

Sports have been shown to not only boost one’s physical health but also are shown to have significant physiological benefits. Sports have a multitude of positive effects that play a key role in a child’s development. If this bill and others like it pass, many transgender youth will not be able to participate in sports, which will ultimately isolate and marginalize their community even more.

Susan Maasch, director of the Trans Youth Equality Foundation, said in an interview with IndyKids, “These bills are illegal and take away the trans child’s right to an equal education under the law.” Their organization’s mission is to advocate for transgender and non-binary youth in America. When asked if Biden is doing enough, Maasch responded, “He needs to do more, and I believe he will. I hope I am right.”

Transgender: a person whose gender identity is different from the gender they were assigned at birth
Cisgender: a person whose gender identity corresponds with the gender they were assigned at birth
Unconscionable: not right or reasonable
Marginalized: placed in a position of little or no importance, influence or power
Breaking News

Booget Fire Becomes Nation’s Largest Wildfire

Having already scorched over 350,000 acres—an area larger than Los Angeles—the Oregon wildfire has now become the largest burning in the United States this year. Named after the nearby Booget Spring, the fire began on July 6 and has now forced over 2,000 people from their homes. The Booget Fire is just one of 80 major fires currently burning across 13 U.S. states, ignited by heat waves and high winds which hit the region this summer. Climate change, which causes increasing temperatures and changes to rain patterns, fuels the likelihood of fires, which start more often and burn more rapidly than they have in the past, according to National Geographic.

Federal Judge Rules DACA “Illegal”

Bootleg Fire Becomes Nation’s Largest Wildfire

A FREE PAPER FOR KIDS, BY KIDS

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Summer, Fall & Winter. Website updated in the past, according to National Geographic.

Our future now rests with the federal government from accepting new applications to the program. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) estimates that there were approximately 119,000 DACA recipients living and working in the United States in 2020, of which an estimated 200,000 have worked as essential workers throughout the coronavirus pandemic. Their future now rests with the federal court of appeals.

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Turmoil in the Middle East Rises as Israel and Palestine Can’t Find Common Ground

Step on the fire immediately. We’re escalating towards war. That’s the Wassenners, United Nations Middle East envoy, said in a tweet on May 18. In the past few weeks, tension has reached new levels in the ongoing conflict between Palestine and Israel.

The recent violence is, in part, a reaction to Israel’s forced eviction of Palestinian families in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem. But the violence didn’t begin to escalate 27 days prior to these evictions. More likely, the violence was lost in the noise of the virus. Twelve Israeli deaths have also been reported since May 1.

The night of April 13 marked the start of the recent outbreak. Not only was it the first night of the holy month of Ramadan, it was also Memorial Day, honoring those who died fighting for Palestine.

According to the New York Times, “Israel said it was responding to a ‘safety threat’ given the potential for protests during the holy month of Ramadan.” President Biden has shown his support for Israel and insists that there will be no peace in Israel until they agree to stop all violence.

But the violence can change to self-government, otherwise the two-state solution is the only way to resolve the conflict. President Biden said that the two-state solution is the only way to resolve the conflict.

Before the tax reform sparked a major surge in cases.

The House of Representatives passed the National Origin-Based Anti-Discrimination for Immigrants Act, known as the “NOAAN Act,” by a vote of 215 to 208. The aim was to limit the power of the President to sign travel bans on the basis of religion.

The new law requires the President’s approval for any new travel ban. However, if a travel ban is signed, it will be blocked for 180 days without presidential support. The NOAAN Act is a major step forward in combating religious discrimination.

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The Florida Anti-Riot Bill Conflict

Oscar Toomaasellu • age 12

This April an anti-riot bill was signed into law by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, apparently in an effort to stop violent protests in the state. DeSantis and Florida’s top Republicans cited the Black Lives Matter protests of summer 2020 as a reason why this anti-riot bill was necessary, despite the fact that only a reported 7% of those protests turned violent. In Florida, there has been controversy regarding whether the bill should be upheld.

The anti-riot bill will lengthen prison sentences by up to 15 years for those who partake in riots. The bill expands the definition of a riot and makes it somewhat unclear what is and is not legal under the law. DeSantis called the law the “strongest anti-rioting, pro-law enforcement measure in the country.”

Critics of the bill say that it is “excessive and vague,” according to the Daytona Beach News-Journal. It will limit the people’s right to freely express themselves, but only for some groups, specifically organizations advocating for immigrants’ rights or other racial and social justice issues. This is partly evident due to the fact that DeSanits did not mention the Capitol riot on Jan. 6 during his speech introducing the new bill. In an attempt to stop violence on the streets of Florida, the anti-riot bill has sparked a battle over what civil rights we as citizens of the United States truly hold. Soon after the ceremonial signing of the anti-riot bill, the Lawyers Matter Task Force, a nonprofit organization, and other plaintiffs filed a lawsuit against DeSantis and the new anti-riot bill. The plaintiffs explained that the bill was seeking “to arrest the peaceful expression of free speech.” The bill is a “shameless injustice to Florida citizens and infringes on multiple constitutional rights,” according to Shannon Ligon, founder of the Lawyers Matter Task Force.

“The fact that people would now be afraid to go out and protest is another way of attacking your First Amendment right,” explained civil rights attorney Melisa Pearson to the New York Times. “This means people are going to be less likely to exercise that right due to fear of excessive government action.”

Protests Banned at Olympics

ABHI AGARWAL • age 12

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has upheld Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter to ban specific protests on the Olympic field and podium.

For being postponed for a year because of COVID-19, the Summer Olympics are happening in Tokyo beginning July 23. But the pandemic isn’t the only new adjustment for the athletes. New guidelines issued last year by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) have upheld Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter to ban specific protests on the Olympic field and podium. Rule 50 in the IOC Charter states, “No kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas.” As per the IOC Athletes’ Commission, Rule 50 intends to stop political protests from occurring on the Olympic field and podium so that athletes can focus on their performance. The commission also states that Rule 50 respects athletes’ celebration, but not in a political, religious or ethnic demonstration, and that the Olympics’ focus has to be on the athletes’ performance, the sports and the spirit of harmony between athletes.

The IOC consulted with over 3,500 athletes regarding the Rule 50 guidelines and found that a majority of athletes are in favor of keeping the podium, venue and games free of political protests.

Critics say that Rule 50 denies the long political history of the Olympics and how many athletes over the years have used the podium and field in a stand against injustice and to spread word about corruption in their respective communities. Athletes who violate Rule 50 will undergo disciplinary action, which will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Protests at Olympic events are nothing new. With the world watching, it is inevitable that some athletes choose to take a political stand while on the podium. One of the most iconic moments was when John Carlos and Tommie Smith, two Black sprinters from the United States, raised their fists in a Black power demonstration at the Mexico Olympics in 1968. Both of the athletes were sent home after the event. Some athletes, like Megan Rapinoe, a famous Olympic soccer player, state that Rule 50 focuses on the protests but not what the protests represent. She wrote on her Instagram following the announcement of the new guidelines, “So much is being done about the protests. So little being done about what we are protesting about. We will not be silenced.”

A Wave of Anti-Protest Laws Around the U.S.

ZAHRA LATHFEEL • age 11

After the police murder of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man in Minneapolis, protests erupted across the United States denouncing racial injustice. Around the country, some Republican-controlled state legislatures began taking steps to stop these protests and started to pass anti-protest bills. The bills are designed to target riots; however, “riot” is defined as a gathering of three or more people that threatens public safety. Republican lawmakers in 34 states have introduced over 100 anti-riot bills since the beginning of 2021.

The International Olympic Committee has upheld Rule 50 guidelines issued last year by the Olympic Charter to ban specific protests on the Olympic field and podium. New York Black Lives Matter protest. Like Martin in Fort. Tufekci in toward an injustice and change Lives Matter movement has 1963 is widely credited with openDemocracy.net. at the University of Kent, at Richard Norman, professor of Lauren, in an interview with NBC News. He explains that these laws are an attempt to “restrict who can participate in democracy.”

Laws that attempt to punish people for exercising their right to protest violate the most basic and fundamental rights of Americans. As Moni Holder, senior director of advocacy and programs for a nonprofit organization, said, “We can never create a tactic to silence our voices.”

“The reason so many protests exist in the first place isn’t that they are trying to change things about our society and our political system that are fundamentally broken.”

Matthew Delmont, Dartmouth College.
Following nationwide protests after the murder of unarmed Black man, George Floyd, the House of Representatives passed the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act in March this year. The legislation aims to reduce the number of Black victims of police brutality, change the police training experience of overseas service and ensure that what happened to Floyd will not repeat itself.

Convicted murderer and former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin pressed his knee on Floyd’s neck for 9 minutes and 29 seconds, ignoring Floyd’s cries for help and several indications that he could not breathe.

According to Statista, within the first five months of 2021, 371 people were shot and killed by police officers in the United States. Despite Black people only making up 13% of the population, there are 51.8% of every 1,000 people killed by police are Black. Black people are shot at a disproportionate rate and are 2.5 times more likely to be shot by police officers.

The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act attempts to curb unlawful police behavior by making it easier to hold individual officers accountable. Until now, officers have been greatly shielded by qualified immunity—a legal precedent that protects government officials, as well as police officers, from legal punishment or lawsuits. According to Mapping Police Violence, 98.3% of killings by police officer from 2013 to 2020 did not result in officers being charged with a crime.

The new bill will also require that federal law enforcement officials hold a dashboard camera. It will also enforce a permanent ban on the use of the chokehold that has ended so many lives, as well as the use of no-knock warrants in drug cases. Police departments will have 2 years to adopt new policies if they do not implement these new changes completely with the bill.

Texas Democratic Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee said during a March 3 debate in the House of Representatives that the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act does not go far enough, as it does not define the police. Monica Simpson, executive director of SistersSong, agrees.

“When we made big moves?” Simpson said in an interview with Vox. “I’m not saying it’s bad legislation. Everything’s that’s in there makes sense, for the most part, it’s things that people want. But it is the biggest, boldest move that we can make.”

If there is one thing both sides agree on, it’s that the conviction of Derek Chauvin changed the mindset of the country. According to Vox, low enforcement officers are now being held accountable for killings, especially for those victims who are Black. George Floyd’s death has led the country toward holding police accountable.

“We have enough evidence that tells us that action needs to be taken,” says Satin Niz, a criminologist at the University of Nebraska Omaha. “One thousand deaths a year does not have to be normal.”

Meet IndyKids Reporter: Aaray Agarwal, age 12

Aaray is a 12-year-old published author, radio host, founder of the Storytelling Society of India and IndyKids journalist from Bangalore, India.

Aaray: How and when did you develop your passion for writing?

Sara: I’ve always wanted to be a writer. I love to write and I’ve been writing ever since I can remember. When I was young, I used to write stories by the age of 7, and that’s how my journey started.

Aaray: What do you hope to accomplish in the coming years as a writer?

Sara: I hope to write on issues that have been present in the world for a long time and to help in contributing to solve them. I also want to write my views to make an impact in the local communities and in the world. I believe change starts locally and spreads slowly to the rest of the world. I want to make people understand what issues are present in the world so that I can inspire other people to take a stand.

Aida: Why do you think social justice reporting is important as a kid journalist?

Sara: When I was growing up, I watched the news, and I had a fascination with how it was reported on and perceived in the world. I also read books about history, and I was interested in learning about how people’s lives changed over time and how different social justice movements led to change. I was also interested in learning more about the history of social justice and the people who were involved in it.

Aaray: What do you want to see happen in the world through your writing?

Sara: I want to see a world where people are treated fairly and where everyone has equal opportunities. I also want to see a world where people are able to live peacefully and where there is no discrimination based on race, gender, or sexual orientation. I also want to see a world where people are able to get an education and where they are able to make a living.

Aaray: Why do you think social justice reporting is important as a kid journalist?

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Aida: What do you think your impact has been on your journey in writing?

Sara: I am inspired by all the writers that write endlessly, not because it’s a job, but because they enjoy it. I am also inspired by my mother, who has helped me to continue writing even when I felt writing was boring. But then my mom showed me what I had forgotten—the wonders of writing—and she supported my every step. She is my inspiration.
Getting Wild With...  

**Seahorses!**

AZUL CASIQUEZ • age 9 and INDYKIDS STAFF

There are 46 different species of seahorses. These strange-looking creatures range in size from 0.6 inches up to 14 inches long. Although they live in the sea, seahorses are poor swimmers. They live in shallow ocean areas, particularly in eelgrass beds, but they move into deeper waters to escape the colder seasons. Seahorses eat tiny shrimp called mysis shrimp, and they feed 30 to 50 times a day.

Project Seahorse, a marine conservation organization based in Canada that works to maintain healthy and well-managed marine ecosystems, considers seahorses as a flagship species. The organization believes that there are 14 species of endangered seahorses.

Seahorses face many threats, such as habitat loss, climate change, unmanaged fishing activities and a high demand from some medical industries. Project Seahorse estimates that 70 million seahorses get caught globally by unregulated fishing practices every year. According to Mongabay News, seahorses are traded in large volumes, despite bans on exports of the animals from source countries. Most of these illegally traded seahorses are sold in dried forms to be used in traditional Chinese medicines.

Despite bans on trading small marine life like seahorses, the trade has continued to flourish. Thailand, one of the biggest exporters of seahorses, banned the practice in 2016. However, according to Sarah Foster, a research associate with Project Seahorse, this did not prevent the trade from continuing. “Dried seahorses are very easy to move across borders—they are small and, being dried, keep well over long time periods,” said Foster in an interview. The seahorses can be easily transported with shipments of dried seafood, she explains.