

Lieutenant governor's new task force continues debate over transgender student athletes

A new task force [announced Monday](#) by Lt. Gov. Stavros Anthony (R) will support a bill barring transgender athletes from women's sports and blocking them from competing against cisgender female athletes, he said during a Wednesday phone interview with *The Nevada Independent*.

Anthony, a retired police officer and former Las Vegas city councilman, also said he opposes a [2014 policy](#) by the Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association (NIAA), the governing body for state's high school athletic programs, that allows transgender student athletes to participate in NIAA-sanctioned sports.

The task force members are Sen. Carrie Buck (R-Henderson), Assemblyman Bert Gurr (R-Elko), Washoe County Commissioner Clara Andriola, Sparks City Councilwoman Charlene Bybee and Nevada Wolf Pack women's volleyball team captain Sia Li'ili'i. Marshi Smith, a former collegiate swimmer and co-founder of the Independent Council on Women's Sports (ICONS), will serve as the group's chair.

"It's about fair competition and equal opportunity, and making sure that female athletes are not having, you know, awards and titles taken away from them by biological men," Anthony said, adding that "I don't have an issue with transgender people at all."

Outside of a handful of examples highlighted in conservative and

British media outlets, there is scant evidence in Nevada of transgender athletes hurting female students physically during competition or hindering their opportunities. Anthony said he didn't have any data on how many transgender athletes are competing on Nevada high school or college level teams, but said "one is too many."

"We can't have a situation where we even have one biological male playing against women because it's not safe, it's not fair, and it's not right," he said.

In December, Charlie Baker, the president of the NCAA, which oversees college sport and a former Republican Massachusetts governor, that there are fewer [than 10](#) transgender athletes among the more than 510,000 student athletes who compete for NCAA schools.

While the scope of the task force falls outside of Anthony's usual [statutory duties](#) as lieutenant governor, which includes serving as the chairman of the Commission on Tourism and serving on boards related to transportation, economic development and audits, he said it relates to his position as president of the state Senate, a generally [ceremonial role](#) that involves presiding over daily proceedings, such as reading through agenda items and deciding which lawmaker should speak first.

"It's my responsibility to promote and push along legislation that I believe is important," Anthony said.

The announcement comes about two weeks before the inauguration of President-elect Donald Trump, who [has suggested](#) he would ban transgender female athletes from women's sports.

A 2023 [Gallup survey](#) found that about 70 percent of Americans

believe transgender athletes should only be allowed to play on sports teams that match their birth gender.

In a Wednesday statement, Silver State Equality, a statewide LGBTQ+ civil rights advocacy nonprofit, accused Anthony of “using transgender youth as political pawns in a shameful display of divisive politics.”

American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada Executive Director Athar Haseebullah said if the ban on transgender female athletes in women’s sports were to make it out of the Democrat-controlled state Legislature, it would violate the Equal Rights Amendment added to Nevada’s Constitution by a statewide vote in 2022, which guarantees equal rights regardless “of race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, ancestry, or national origin.”

Anthony said the impetus for the task force came from the UNR’s women’s volleyball team, which protested and forfeited a match against San Jose State University last October over concerns about playing against a transgender player, following [similar moves](#) by other teams throughout the season. Anthony and Republican Gov. Joe Lombardo [supported](#) the team’s decision.

Lombardo’s spokeswoman, Elizabeth Ray, did not respond to a request for comment from Lombardo on whether he supported the task force. But in 2023, [Lombardo joined](#) other governors in a letter to the NCAA requesting a ban on transgender athletes in women’s sports.

According to [a 2023 survey](#) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, less than 4 percent of U.S. high school students identify as transgender. GLSEN, a national human rights organization, estimates

that Nevada has about 1,300 transgender youth between the ages of 13 and 17.

A [2014 statement](#) by the NIAA allows transgender student athletes at the high school level to participate in an NIAA-sanctioned sport in accordance with his or her gender identity.

An [NCAA policy](#) allows transgender female players on women's sports teams under some circumstances. ICONS filed a lawsuit against the policy last year.

Anthony said Buck and Gurr will introduce two bills during the upcoming legislative session related to transgender women in women's sports. Gurr plans to [bring back](#) a 2023 bill, [AB374](#), that would have required the NIAA and the Nevada Board of Regents, which governs the state's colleges and universities, adopt rules and regulations effectively separating play based on the sex athletes were assigned at birth. AB374 died without getting a hearing. Gurr said in a Jan. 9 interview that the language for his new bill wasn't finalized as of last Thursday.

Buck said in a Thursday phone interview that her bill would create coed leagues at the high school and college level that athletes of any sex or gender identity could participate in, and would require cisgender female student athletes be informed upfront that they are competing with or against a transgender athlete.

"So my main goal in the bill is to bring transparency for all involved, so that biological women have fair, safe and equitable chance to participate, as well biological men who are transgender also have their rights not stepped on," she said.

Twenty-six states have a law or regulation that bans transgender

students from participating in sports that align with their gender identity, according to the [Movement Advancement Project](#), a nonprofit think tank.

Last year, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals' affirmed [an injunction](#) by a district court against a 2020 Idaho bill that would have banned transgender girls and women participating in school sports that align with their gender identity when it found that the legislation "likely violates the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment." Other similar laws have faced similar challenges.

In 2024, the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), the governing body for small college athletics programs, [passed a policy](#) that allows all athletes to participate in NAIA-sponsored men's sports but limits women's sports interscholastic competitions to only athletes whose biological sex assigned at birth is female and who have not begun hormone therapy, with the exception of competitive cheer and competitive dance.

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