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Last Updated: 05/23/2023



National Women in Sports Day, 1987

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

In 1885, Oberlin College established the first department of physical education for women in a coeducational school. Today, some 100 years later, women's sports are a vital component of college life and their impact is felt far beyond the university campus.

The history of women in sports is rich and long and has provided millions with an opportunity for growth, development, and the pursuit of challenging goals. From youth sports to the Olympic arena, female athletes have shown levels of spirit, talent, and accomplishment undreamt of on that midwest campus a century ago.

Participation in sports contributes to the emotional, physical, and intellectual development of women of all ages. Through individual and team activities, young girls develop self-discipline, initiative, respect for fair play and cooperation, and communication and leadership skills that will help them succeed throughout their lives. Early positive experiences strongly influence wholesome lifelong habits of physical fitness, and thus have a direct bearing on the health and well-being of this Nation.

Great strides have been made in women's athletics along with the realization that women are entitled to equal opportunity on and off the playing field. In 1972 only a handful of college athletic scholarships were made available for women; today they number some 10,000. In the past decade the number of women involved in college athletics has grown from 32,000 to 150,000. This same period saw a 110 percent increase in female participation in public high school sports programs. In 1984, the women on our Olympic team brought home 44 percent of the gold medals available to them, making America's female athletes a significant force on the international sports scene.

The number of women participating in sports continues to grow, and we will continue to assure that more opportunities are created. From coach to administrator, women play an important role in the development of athletic programs for people of all ages.

In recognition of the contributions women's sports have made to this country, and of the need to further advance women's sports, the Congress, by Public Law 99-540, has designated February 4, 1987, as "National Women in Sports Day" and authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this event.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim February 4, 1987, as National Women in Sports Day.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this third day of February, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eleventh.

Ronald Reagan