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## Thank Edith Green for Title IX

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By **Rachel Bachman, The Oregonian**



**View full size**Courtesy of Richard

GreenThe late Edith Green, en route to lunch at the White House with President Gerald Ford in September 1976, crossed party lines to campaign for the Republican nominee against Democrat Jimmy Carter.

**By RACHEL BACHMAN**

One day during the 1960s, Edith Green took a break from her job as a U.S. representative from Oregon, one of the few women in Congress, and eased into the House swimming pool. She was surprised to encounter a male senator -- paddling in the nude.

Back then women in athletics, as in politics, were seen as interlopers. That began to change when Green crafted the bill that became Title IX, the one-sentence annex to the Education Amendments of 1972 that banned sex discrimination in schools receiving federal funding.

Green, who would have turned 100 today, rarely gets credit for Title IX. But her tenacity gave millions of women access to school sports teams, and even the chance to simply attend college.

The Portland Democrat aimed to open up higher education to female employees and students. Before Title IX's passage -- nearly two decades after the Supreme Court condemned segregated schools -- universities routinely restricted the number of women they admitted.

The practice was widespread in graduate schools but extended even to undergraduate education at public schools. It took a court order in 1970, for instance, for the University of Virginia's College of Arts and Sciences to admit women. According to a 1964 study, in the early 1960s state colleges in Virginia turned down the applications of 21,000 women -- and not one man

A teacher and advocate for the underdog, Green served in the House from 1954 to 1974, opposing President Lyndon Johnson on the Vietnam War and arguing bills so persuasively that she sometimes swayed votes on the House floor.

"I was always very proud of the fact that the assembly hushed when she got up to speak," recalled Marilyn Stapleton, Green's chief of staff in the early 1970s.

In 1970 Green introduced a higher-education bill with provisions regarding sex equity and held hearings that "are considered the first legislative step toward the enactment of Title IX," according to U.S. Department of Education records.

Green worked tirelessly to educate legislators and gain support for the concept of equality that Title IX represented, but she knew how precarious the bill was. So when supporters asked about lobbying, Green advised: Don't. She didn't want to stir opposition.

"So we didn't lobby, and she was absolutely right," said Bernice Sandler, who Green hired to work on Title IX. "The bill passed."

In the 38 years since then, colleges and universities have transformed from male-dominated enclaves to

places in which half of students are female, including law and medical schools. Women have advanced in politics, setting the stage for the 2008 election's female candidates for president and vice president.

Although Green wasn't an athlete herself, aside from occasional tennis, Title IX also was an unparalleled breakthrough for women in sports. Girls made up 7percent of high school athletes before Title IX passed; in 2009 they made up 41percent.

Still, few people know of Green's work on Title IX. She left office two years after the bill was enacted, and co-sponsor Rep. Patsy Mink, D-Hawaii, defended the legislation through decades of opponents' attempts to weaken it. Mink became the face of Title IX, and in its 1987 obituary of Green, The New York Times didn't even mention her landmark legislation.

But as Green's life neared its end, she thought back to that pivotal time, Green's younger son, Richard, said.

"That's what she wanted to be remembered for," he said. "Title IX."

Green deserves to be. Before her, many women were stuck on deck. Because of her, we can all dive in.

Rachel Bachman is a sportswriter for The Oregonian. Reach her at 503-221-4373 or [rachelbachman@news.oregonian.com](mailto:rachelbachman@news.oregonian.com)

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