



**TESTIMONY OF REAR ADMIRAL SANDRA STOSZ  
SUPERINTENDENT, U.S. COAST GUARD ACADEMY**

**ON “FORTY YEARS AND COUNTING: THE TRIUMPHS OF TITLE IX”**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND  
PENSIONS**

**JUNE 19, 2012**

Good morning Chairman Harkin, Senator Enzi, and distinguished Members of the Committee. I am Rear Admiral Sandra Stosz, Superintendent of the U. S. Coast Guard Academy.

Thank you for inviting me to speak about the impact of Title IX. I must start by thanking the many women who went before me – the female athletes and members of the Coast Guard Women’s Reserve – and all the women and men who supported seminal legislation that offered women opportunities never before available. These opportunities provided equal access to athletic activities and institutions of higher education from which girls and women were previously excluded.

As the eldest of four siblings, I was a tomboy raised with three brothers. My parents never denied me opportunities at home, and as a youth, I participated with my brothers in competitive swimming and tennis at a local summer recreation facility. By the time I entered high school in 1974, Title IX had been in place for two years, and I took physical education class and participated as an active member of the varsity basketball and track & field teams.

As a shy teenager, athletics shaped and focused me and gave me the confidence to realize that through perseverance and hard work, I could pave my own road to success. Winning the state championship in my track and field event was a life-changing experience for me, and I am confident it is what motivated me to set my sights high and helped distinguish my application for admission to the Coast Guard Academy.

Receiving a high school education rich in science and math also played an important role in preparing me for success in life. My father was a scientist, and as a young girl I always dreamed of becoming a biologist, zoologist, ornithologist, or anything ending in “ologist.” I took all the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math courses available in high school. Induction into the National Honor Society and graduating in the top five percent of my high school class built my confidence in my own abilities.

In 1975, when I was a junior in high school, a second piece of seminal legislation was enacted requiring the federal service academies to open their doors to admit women. Living in Ellicott City, Maryland, I read an article in the “Baltimore Sun” describing the Naval Academy and the wealth of opportunity available to those who could persevere through the incredibly demanding nomination and admissions process. Straight away I started the application process, eventually achieving a coveted nomination to the U.S. Naval Academy from Senator Paul Sarbanes. At that point my application entered the competition for an appointment.

An observant guidance counselor informed me that there was a Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut, that offered virtually the same opportunities, but operated on the direct admission process. I applied to the U. S. Coast Guard Academy initially as a backup, but when I was quickly offered an appointment, I sent in my deposit, pleased and proud to have been accepted to a high quality institution of higher education that valued me entirely on my own merit.

In 1978, I entered the Coast Guard Academy as a member of just the third class of women to be admitted. Women's sports teams were still being established, and there were not enough women to field full teams. Sailing was easy to adopt as a coed sport, so that was where I applied myself for most of my four years as a cadet. Learning seamanship and boat handling as a cadet also prepared me well for my career at sea as an officer. I also swam for a season as the first woman ever on the men's swim team, and took pride in having helped pave the way when the Academy eventually stood up a women's swim team.

As a result of my interest in science, I initially pursued the Marine Science major at the Coast Guard Academy. However, I shifted over to Government as a result of broadening interests. Today, the Marine Environmental Science major is one of six technical majors offered at the Academy, and it is a huge draw for women. The Academy also offers degrees in Management and Government. All degrees conferred are Bachelor of Science degrees as a result of our Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) based core curriculum. Over the past decade, nearly two-thirds of our women have graduated with STEM degrees, which is on par with their male counterparts. All Ensigns graduate with their degree, along with a commission in the U. S Coast Guard and guaranteed employment in service to their nation.

I graduated from the Coast Guard Academy in 1982 and now, 30 years later, have the distinct honor and privilege of serving as Superintendent of my alma mater. I am very proud of the fact that women, who made up just over five percent of the cadet corps when I entered in 1978, now comprise one-third of the cadet corps. Although I benefited greatly from Title IX, the real success story is evident in the achievements of the young women who make up today's generation. In their lifetimes, these young women have always had comparable access and parity with their male counterparts. They are expected and encouraged to participate in sports and to pursue STEM majors.

The Coast Guard Academy offers 21 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) sports – 11 for men, nine for women and one (rifle), which is for both men and women. We also offer eight chartered club sports including both men's and women's lacrosse and men's and women's rugby. As the percentage of women has increased at the Academy, we have likewise increased the number of our women's varsity sports, without adversely impacting our men's sports. Nearly 80 percent of our cadets are involved in a varsity or club sport.

This past year, our women's varsity teams performed better than our men's teams. Our women's volleyball team won the Conference championship. The women's varsity crew team recently won the Petite Final, placing seventh in the NCAA Division III national rowing championship and led by All-American Ensign Sarah Jane Otey, a scholar-athlete who has been nominated as the NCAA Woman of the Year. Finally, our women's softball team, led by All-American pitcher Ensign Hayley Feindel, went further than ever before in the post-season, placing third in the NCAA Division III regional tournament.

When the Coast Guard Academy first admitted women in 1976, the decision was made to offer women parity with men in a significant manner beyond academic majors and sports: women were offered access to every operational specialty. Aside from the obvious opportunity this parity provides women, it also

fosters a healthy attitude of inclusion among their male counterparts. Excluding women from certain operational specialties and roles creates a perception that women are less capable of performing the more demanding roles. I am thankful the Coast Guard Academy provided me equal access and parity from the start. Through hard work and perseverance, the progression of women through the ranks was natural. As the first female superintendent of a federal service academy, I am one example of what parity has yielded.

A generation after the implementation of Title IX and other laws offering women equal opportunity, I am proud to see young women and men graduating with confidence and competence from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy as leaders of character in selfless service to their nation. Although Title IX benefitted me, and provided me the opportunities necessary for a successful personal and professional life, I am most thankful for its lasting impact on successive generations of young women who will someday replace me.

I want to close by thanking the Committee for offering this chance to reflect back on a significant moment in our nation's history. Title IX had a huge, positive impact. We owe it to those who worked so hard to provide us with these priceless opportunities to reflect back with thanks for what they did and to look forward with conviction to do our part to make this great nation even better for the next generation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions.