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## **Senate names panel to investigate Title IX abuses**

*Chairman Florez to focus on sex discrimination in college athletics in light of CSUF scandal*

SACRAMENTO – As the shockwaves over a nearly \$6 million verdict against California State University, Fresno, for sex discrimination reverberated in the Capitol halls, Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata (D-East Bay) today announced the formation of the Senate Select Committee on Gender Discrimination and Title IX Implementation.

This week a jury agreed that former CSUF volleyball coach Lindy Vivas was let go over her advocacy on behalf of Title IX – designed to create gender equity in college athletics – as well as the perception that she is a lesbian. The award was \$2 million more than she had sought, reflecting the degree to which they empathized with her experience at the school.

Perata and other legislative leaders expressed a firm resolve to explore whether a pattern of discriminatory behavior toward women in athletics exists at the state’s public universities, or if the ruling against CSUF and its president, John Welty, represent an isolated situation. The size of the verdict and two additional sex discrimination lawsuits pending against CSUF factored heavily in the legislators’ call for hearings and further review.

“It’s sad to see that more than 30 years after this landmark legislation was passed, there are those who would reverse the gains made by women in sport, and in fact, in society,” Perata said in announcing the committee. “Title IX embodies the values of inclusion and equality that ought to be fostered by our public universities. The Members of this Legislature are committed to ensuring that is and continues to be the case.”

The newly-formed committee is expected to be approved by Senate

Rules Committee next week and will be chaired by Senator Dean Florez (D-Shafter), whose Central Valley district includes CSU Fresno. Committee members are expected to include Senators Sheila Kuehl (D-Santa Monica), Abel Maldonado (R-Santa Rosa) and Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento).

Florez, who has questioned whether CSUF would be better served by new leadership given the recent verdict and other serious claims pending, is eager to call Welty to Sacramento to testify on how the situation at his school's athletic department devolved to this point. He and other committee members will also inquire about the university's plan going forward to prevent additional acts of discrimination.

“We have no place in society in today's day and age for the type of disturbing behavior reported at Fresno State,” Florez said. “I look forward to hearing directly from Mr. Welty and his superiors in the university system how they intend to create a new discourse.”

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