

# Reeves signs bill banning biologically male transgender athletes from competing in female sports

*By William H. Perkins Jr.*

*Editor*

Senate Bill 2536 prohibiting biological males from competing in girls' and women's sports as transgender athletes was signed into law March 11 by Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves at the New Capitol in Jackson. "This is an important day for the women and girls of Mississippi," Reeves said. "This important piece of legislation will ensure that young girls in Mississippi have a fair, level playing field in public school sports."

U.S. President Joe Biden on January 20 issued an executive order that will in effect do away with the banning of biologically male transgender athletes who want to compete in female sports.

Section 1 of the executive order states, "Every person should be treated with respect and dignity and should be able to live without fear, no matter who they are or whom they love. Children should be able to learn without worrying about whether they will be denied access to the restroom, the locker room, or school sports... All persons should receive equal treatment under the law, no matter their gender identity or sexual orientation."

Reeves said the new law, also known as the Fairness Act, "sends a clear message to my daughters and all of Mississippi's daughters that their rights are worth fighting for."

The primary author of the bill was Senator Angela Burks Hill (R), a member of Roseland Park Church in Picayune who represents District 40 in Pearl River and Marion Counties. The bill had an additional 21 co-sponsors, all Republicans. The bill passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 81-28 with 13 members not voting. The Senate passed the bill 34-9, with nine members not voting.

The Governor declined to comment on threatened court challenges, saying "I don't think I'm going to be spending a lot of time opining on our chances in court but I do know that we will defend vigorously our right to make these state laws, particularly given the fact that the executive order signed by the President was in fact just a stroke of a pen... and is not a federal law that was passed by the Congress."

Kenny Digby, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission in Jackson, said in written comments after the bill signing, "While the majority in Congress and the White House have gone off the rails in a progressive/liberal direction, I am very grateful for our Mississippi legislative and executive branches.

"The Fairness Act is a great example of state legislation that can try to offset liberal federal legislation like the Equality Act. The Fairness Act attempts to protect our girls and ladies in many settings. A federal court case will settle the issue, but SB 2536 gives a school board or organization a rationale to hold to our traditional values."

Rob Hill, director of the Mississippi office of the pro-LGBTQ Human Rights Campaign in Jackson, told the Mississippi Today news website after the bill earlier passed the state Senate, "All this bill does is put transgender youth at risk of bullying, exclusion, and increased danger while discrimination and violence against transgender people is at a record high in this country. If legislators would simply listen to medical experts and transgender athletes, they might know that

transitioning for the sake of a competitive advantage is simply unrealistic.”