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USA Fencing Let Trans Athletes In Women's Events, Suit Says

By **David Steele**

Law360 (October 30, 2025, 10:05 PM EDT) -- Three women fencers, including a member of the 2024 U.S. Olympic team, accused their sport's national governing body of discriminating against them by allowing transgender female athletes to participate in women's competitions.

In a proposed **class action** filed in Missouri federal court on Wednesday, the women said that the USA Fencing Association failed to prevent transgender athletes from competing in the women's events at the North American Cup in Kansas City, Missouri, in January.

USA Fencing's promotion of the tournament as having separate men's and women's categories constituted false advertisement, and the alleged inclusion of transgender athletes was a violation of Title IX of the U.S. Code's federal antidiscrimination laws, the women said.

"USFA's failure to disclose the inclusion of athletes assigned male at birth in women's events caused numerous adult fencers, minor fencers, and parents of minor fencers to register and pay fees under the reasonable belief that the competitions were restricted to biological females," they said.

"Participants relied on these representations to their detriment and incurred costs associated with registration, travel, lodging, and participation in what they believed were sex-segregated events."

The plaintiffs are 2024 Olympian Margherita Guzzi Vincenti and two competitors in the January tournament, Patricia Hughes and Emma Griffin.

Although the plaintiffs did not claim that transgender women competed in the January tournament designed for cadet and senior fencers, they said that minors as young as 13 were able to qualify and that USA Fencing allowed youth and cadets, or fencers between the ages of 13 and 16, to self-identify their sex without a verification system.

However, USA Fencing's policy for junior and senior events is to require transgender female athletes to complete one calendar year of testosterone-suppression treatment and have them provide proof of the treatment before being allowed to compete, according to the complaint.

"Biological males under 16 were permitted, and could have been expected, to compete in the women's events held at the January 2025 NAC," the plaintiffs said. "This systemic failure to verify hormone-suppression compliance or to segregate competition by biological sex created a deceptive impression of sex-segregated competition while, in reality, abolishing it."

In addition, the women said that USA Fencing misrepresented itself at a May Congressional hearing in claiming that it did not receive federal funding and thus was not bound by President Donald Trump's February executive order banning transgender athletes from women's and girls' sports.

The suit named USA Fencing CEO Phil Andrews and seven members of its board of directors as co-defendants. The proposed class includes all women competitors and the parents of children who competed or registered for the Kansas City tournament.

Guzzi Vincenti said in a statement provided by her counsel at the Dhillon Law Group on Thursday that she expects women's competitions to be for women.

"It is about fairness and preserving opportunities for girls and women who dedicate their lives to

competing on equal terms," she said.

The January tournament was held before USA Fencing announced a policy change in July that went into effect Aug. 1 to comply with the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee's **transgender policies** that are in line with Trump's executive order. Before that, USA Fencing's policy was to permit transgender and nonbinary athletes to compete "in the gender category with which they identify, without restriction."

The plaintiffs demanded damages covering tournament fees and travel and lodging expenses for all class members, as well as at least \$500,000 in punitive damages and the dissolution of USA Fencing's board and a five-year ban for its members. They also requested a jury trial.

"Title IX was enacted to ensure equal athletic opportunities for women," Karin Sweigart, of counsel for Dhillon Law Group, said in the firm's statement. "Our clients are not asking for special treatment, only for the fairness and integrity that women's sports have long promised."

USA Fencing said in a statement on Thursday that it is "aware" of the proposed class action and that it "strongly" disputes the claims.

"We will address this matter through the legal process and have no further comment at this time," the organization said.

The plaintiffs are represented by Karin M. Sweigart of Dhillon Law Group Inc., and Charles X. Wang and James T. Bacon of Mahdavi Bacon Halfhill & Young PLLC.

Counsel information for the defendants could not be determined.

The case is Vincenti et al. v. USA Fencing Association et al., case number 4:25-cv-00850, in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri.

--Editing by Adam LoBelia.