

# **Give Our Athletes Level Salaries (GOALS) Act**

## **Overview**

Senator Manchin is reintroducing the *Give Our Athletes Level Salaries (GOALS) Act* so that pay equity is a requirement for federal funding for the United States Soccer Federation, or U.S. Soccer. The U.S. Women's National Team (USWNT) has won four World Cup titles, including the 2019 World Cup. They are the best in the world and they should be paid like it. Unfortunately, today a player on the women's team earns \$28,333 less than a similarly situated player on the men's team.

## **Background**

In 2019, all 28 players on the USWNT – the best team in the world – were forced to sue their employer, U.S. Soccer, as a result of pay disparity and unequal treatment in regards to travel conditions, training, and support staff. A federal judge dismissed the case in May 2020 on the grounds that USWNT players get paid regardless of time on the field, whereas the USMNT players get paid for playing.

The inequitable pay claims made by the USWNT may have been dismissed by the court, but they should not be dismissed by Congress. While travel conditions and support staff improvements have been made, the USWNT players still make only 89 percent of the compensation of a similarly situated men's team player. This is despite the fact that:

1. Viewership in the FIFA Women's World Cup final outdrew the men's in the U.S. by nearly three million viewers;
2. The USWNT's home jersey is the number one soccer jersey, men's or women's, ever sold by Nike in one season; and
3. From fiscal year (FY) 2016 to 2018, women's games generated around \$900,000 more revenue than men's games.

U.S. Soccer, a government-created and generally unsupervised monopoly, was created by the Amateur Sports Act in 1978, which requires national sports organizations to “provide equitable support and encouragement for participation by women where separate programs for male and female athletes are conducted on a national basis.” It's clear that U.S. Soccer has not held up its end of the bargain. This bill would simply require U.S. Soccer to provide equitable pay to USWNT players before receiving any additional federal funding for the 2026 World Cup.

## **The GOALS Act**

The *GOALS Act* is straightforward. It requires U.S. Soccer to agree to provide equitable pay to both the men's and women's national teams before any federal funds may be used for activities related to the 2026 World Cup.

While federal funds are not directly appropriated toward U.S. Soccer, there are a variety of ways that federal funding will likely be used by U.S. Soccer and its affiliates, including FIFA and CONCACAF, during the next World Cup in 2026, which will be hosted in part by in the United States. For example, the State Department must issue visa waivers and other special privileges for visiting FIFA officials. Host cities may request federal grants assistance for infrastructure upgrades, security, and other services associated with the games that will take place in the United States.

The federal government can and should be a partner in the success of the 2026 World Cup. Equitable pay is a fair and reasonable condition for this funding.