

The Government Reform Committee holds a hearing examining steroid use among young women for athletic training and body image.

### **Rep. Waxman's Statement:**

Chairman Davis, I want to thank you for holding this hearing today. This is our fourth hearing on steroid use. Our first three hearings have focused on male professional athletes and the impact of their steroid use on male high school and college students. Today we are examining whether steroids are a problem for young women too.

In April, about the same time as our hearings on steroid use in the NFL, several newspaper stories focused on a potentially new issue: the use of steroids by young women. These stories pointed to CDC survey data showing that over 5% of high school women had reported using steroids. According to experts, the women using these drugs are not just high school and college athletes looking for a competitive advantage, but girls with body image problems hoping to achieve a lean and muscular look.

These stories got our attention, in part because they suggest that the pressure to use these drugs illegally extends beyond the locker rooms and playing fields where we have been focusing our inquiry. Steroid use among female athletes is, unfortunately, nothing new. We're all familiar with the images of the East German female athletes from the 1970s and 1980s. But it seems to me that if young women today are taking steroids at high rates — and taking them not just to improve their athletic performance, but to meet a socially expected standard of how they should look — then perhaps the steroid problem is even bigger than we have thought.

Our hearings today will examine the use of steroids by young women. First, we will hear from two athletes. Kelli White is a former World Champion sprinter, currently serving a two-year ban for steroid use. To her credit, she's been speaking out about the mistakes she has made. We'll hear from her today about the pressures on young women athletes to use steroids. We'll also hear from Mari Holden, a world champion cyclist who's been able to do it without drugs. I know that young women can learn from both examples that they can compete and win at the highest level of sports without resorting to illegal steroid use.

Our second panel consists of five medical experts. They will help us to examine what I think is the most important question of this hearing: how big is the problem of high school women using steroids?

CDC survey data show that over 5% of high-school women have used steroids. Separate data from National Institute of Drug Abuse surveys shows much lower usage among women, indicating that 1.1% of high-school aged women are using steroids. In both cases, the government data shows a disturbing trend, with reported steroid use among women increasing four-fold over the last decade.

We'll hear from at least one expert today who thinks that these government figures dramatically overstate the problem of steroid use among women, which he calls an "illusion." And we'll hear from a number of others who may be skeptical of the high-end estimates, but have little

doubt that steroid use among women is growing, and represents a serious public health problem.

I hope we can get to the bottom of this today. We don't need to walk out of this room with a precise figure on the extent of steroid use by young women, but I hope we can determine if it is a serious public health problem, and if so, what we can do about it.

Our legislation, the Clean Sports Act, will help solve some of these problems. We'll hear from our witnesses today how society's attitude towards steroids — and the professional athletes who use them — impacts young females. By making it clear that steroid use is unacceptable for elite athletes, our legislation will send a strong message to both the male and female high school and college athletes who see these elite competitors as role models. But it may be that we need to do more. Our witnesses today will give us broader insight into the extent of steroid use by young women, the reasons for this use, and the ways to stop it.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for your continued attention to the problem of steroid use, and I look forward to the hearing.

### **Documents and Links**

- [Testimony of Sprinter Kelli White](#)
- [Testimony of Cyclist Mari Holden](#)