



IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## MEDIA ALERT

### **ICONS Backs Coach and Eleven Volleyball Players from Five Universities in Lawsuit Against NCAA Mountain West Conference**

**Las Vegas, NV** – Today, the Independent Council on Women’s Sports ([ICONS](#)) announced its support and financial backing for a critical [lawsuit](#) filed by a coach and eleven female athletes from five universities against the Mountain West Conference (MWC) and San Jose State University (SJSU). The lawsuit challenges policies that have allowed a male athlete to take a women’s volleyball scholarship and compete on the women’s team, compromising the safety, fairness, and rights of female athletes.

ICONS proudly stands behind these collegiate female athletes and their commitment to preserving the right to free speech and equal opportunities for women in sports.

San Jose State volleyball captain and plaintiff, **Brooke Slusser**, took her story public earlier this season and is determined to protect future athletes. “Women must speak up now,” she states. “This lawsuit sends a clear message: universities will face consequences for placing female athletes in harmful and unlawful situations. We won’t ignore the differences between males and females, and we won’t be silenced. I’m grateful to take this fight to court.”

Brooke is joined by SJSU Associate Head Coach **Melissa Batie-Smoose** who was suspended for defending her female athletes. “Fairness and safety cannot exist when male athletes are allowed to compete against women. These brave young women deserve a safe environment and solid support. I couldn’t stay silent for another day,” said Batie-Smoose.

Five teams, four from the MWC, have forfeited games this season in protest of competing against a male player. Utah State University’s captain **Kaylie Ray**, another plaintiff, emphasized the need for leadership. “We need leaders in the Mountain

West and NCAA to step up. Being a woman in sports has shaped my life, and I will do everything to protect this opportunity for other girls and women.”

University of Nevada Reno captain **Sia Lillii** emphasized the need for strong leadership, stating, “The NCAA is failing us. The Mountain West Conference is failing us. We need leaders who will take responsibility and treat female athletes with dignity and respect.”

**Marshi Smith**, Co-Founder of ICONS, underlined the lawsuit’s significance: “The disregard for the fairness and safety of female athletes by the MWC and SJSU is unacceptable. ICONS is honored to support these athletes in their fight for justice. We’re fully committed to challenging policies that threaten decades of progress in women’s sports.”

ICONS calls on SJSU and the MWC to cease enforcement of these contested policies and begin repairing the damage done to these athletes and women’s sports.

“Leaders must stop prioritizing the needs of male athletes over the rights of women,” said ICONS Co-Founder **Kim Jones**. “Supporting these lawsuits is crucial to enacting change nationwide to protect women and girls from these unfair environments. We invite all supporters of women’s rights to join us in [giving](#) these athletes their day in court.”

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Contribute to the legal fund: [www.takeonthemountainwest.com](http://www.takeonthemountainwest.com)

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