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## NEWS RELEASE

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OCTOBER 9, 2008

### **NC WESLEYAN COLLEGE REINSTATES WOMEN'S LACROSS TEAM AFTER PUBLIC JUSTICE THREATENS TITLE IX SEX DISCRIMINATION LAWSUIT**

Facing a lawsuit from Public Justice, North Carolina Wesleyan College has agreed to reinstate its women's intercollegiate athletic lacrosse program in compliance with Title IX, the federal law that prohibits sex discrimination by educational institutions receiving federal funds.

The Rocky Mount, N.C., school announced that it was cancelling the women's program in October 2007 in the midst of the team's recruiting season. Under the agreement, the school will reinstate the program immediately, operating the team at an elevated club status while it hires a head coach and starts recruiting student-athletes, and field a full varsity team for the 2009-2010 season.

"I'm thrilled that the team has been reinstated," said Kathleen Penrod, a junior at North Carolina Wesleyan who played for the women's lacrosse team. "I am happy and relieved that the school has agreed to do the right thing."

In a May 12 demand letter, Public Justice charged that the school's decision to eliminate the women's lacrosse program violated Title IX's three-part test for determining whether a university has provided "equal opportunities" for both genders to participate in sports.

The letter stated that North Carolina Wesleyan could not demonstrate that it provided substantially equivalent athletic opportunities for male and female athletes; that it had a history of expanding the number of athletic opportunities available to female athletes; or that the interest and abilities of female athletes were being met. In response to Public Justice's letter, which raised the possibility of a federal lawsuit, the school agreed to negotiate, a move that culminated in the new agreement.

"This is a great win for the athletes at North Carolina Wesleyan and everyone who cares about equal opportunity for women in sports," said Public Justice's lead counsel Burton Craige. "We are delighted that the school has agreed to reinstate the team."

Public Justice has a long history of legal action that results in the enforcement of Title IX provisions. The national public interest law firm has successfully sued several colleges and universities for illegally discriminating against women in athletics, including Brown University, the University of Bridgeport at Connecticut, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Temple University, and West Chester University.

Along with Craige, a lawyer with Patterson Harkavy in Raleigh, N.C., the North Carolina Wesleyan women's lacrosse team was represented by Public Justice Staff Attorney Leslie Brueckner and Public Justice's Goldberg, Waters & Kraus Fellow Amy Radon.

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Public Justice is America's public interest law firm, supported by - and calling on -- a nationwide network of more than 3,000 of the nation's top lawyers to pursue precedent-setting and socially significant litigation. It has a wide-ranging litigation docket in the areas of consumer rights, worker safety, civil rights and liberties, toxic torts, environmental protection, and access to the courts. Public Justice is the principal project of the Public Justice Foundation, a not-for-profit membership organization headquartered in Washington, DC, with a West Coast office in Oakland, California. The Public Justice web site address is [www.publicjustice.net](http://www.publicjustice.net).