

Winston & Strawn Files Action with EEOC on Behalf of United States Women's National Soccer Team

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NEW YORK – Five members of the World Cup Champion United States Women's National Soccer Team (USWNT) have filed an action with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) accusing the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) of wage discrimination.

According to the USSF recently released financial report, the USWNT produced many millions in additional revenues in 2015. Despite their being the USSF economic engine, USWNT players Carli Lloyd, Alex Morgan, Megan Rapinoe, Becky Sauerbrunn, and Hope Solo allege that the players on the USWNT are paid almost four times less than the United States Men's National Soccer Team (USMNT).

"We have been quite patient over the years with the belief that the Federation would do the right thing and compensate us fairly," said Lloyd.

"Recently, it has become clear that the Federation has no intention of providing us equal pay for equal work," said Rapinoe.

"We had to take our fight for equity and equality to another battlefield," added Sauerbrunn.

"The numbers speak for themselves," said Solo, a member of the USWNT for 15 years. "We are the best in the world, have three World Cup Championships, four Olympic Championships, and the USMNT get paid more to just show up, than we get paid to win major championships."

Winston & Strawn LLP Co-Chairman Jeffrey Kessler, the prominent sports lawyer representing the players, noted that the tenor of recent collective bargaining agreement (CBA) negotiations between the USWNT Players Association and the USSF created the need for the Players to pursue this legal action.

"In early January, the Women's National Team Players Association submitted a reasonable proposal for a new CBA that had equal pay for equal work as its guiding principle," said Kessler. "U.S. Soccer responded by suing the players in an effort to keep in place the discriminatory and unfair treatment they have endured for years, but are now fighting to end on behalf of all female athletes."

Morgan notes that it is not just about compensation: “We want to play in top-notch, grass-only facilities like the U.S. Men’s National Team. We want to have equitable and comfortable travel accommodations, and we simply want equal treatment.”

Once a charge is filed with the EEOC, that agency conducts an independent investigation, ultimately issues its findings and, if warranted, seeks relief on behalf of the complainants. The players’ charge has been filed to seek relief on behalf of all the members of the USWNT, so that this unequal treatment can finally be brought to an end.

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