Nixon & Trans Athletes

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The President of the United States clashed with the governor of Maine over transgender participation in government-organized athletics. Quite a hoot.

Behind this fracas looms the legacy of … Richard M. Nixon.

First, the fracas: "In a tense exchange with Maine Democratic Gov. Janet Mills, President Donald Trump threatened to strip Maine of its federal funding," explains CNN, "if the state refuses to comply with his executive order banning transgender women from competing in women's sports."

The brief volley of promises (threats) between the governor and the president made other governors "uncomfortable." Yes, that's a news story.

"Is Maine here?" he wondered aloud. "The governor of Maine?"

"Yeah," Gov. Janet Mills answered from across the room. "I'm here."

And then came a testy political exchange, the kind you don't often see, culminating in this from Trump: "You better comply, you better comply, because, otherwise, you're not getting any federal funding."

"See you in court," she promised.

"Good; I'll see you in court. I look forward to that. That should be a real easy one. And enjoy your life after governor, because I don't think you'll be in elected politics."

Trump may not be wrong. He may have the better legal case.

But doesn't it seem weird that the president of the United States can extort compliance from the states on matters that are not enumerated in the Constitution?

Well, back in his first term Trump signed an executive order to direct a new devolution process of turning back education to the states. But the transgender issue is a big deal, and most Americans (around 80 percent) are against "biological" "men" competing with girls and women in sports, and since much of sports in America takes place in state-directed/taxpayer-funded contexts, Trump is leveraging federal bloc grants against states that balk at his agenda.

Thank Nixon and his "New Federalism." While an attempt to give power back to the states, it also tied federal money to the devolution, which has effectively turned states into welfare queens begging big bucks off Washington, severely compromising the states' … basic competence.

It's this policy that Trump should be fighting.

But that would make governors even more uncomfortable.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.