

TEAM USA ATHLETES' COMMISSION

IMPACT REPORT 2023



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Two thousand twenty-three was a pivotal year for the Team USA Athletes' Commission (Team USA AC), which included celebrating 50 Years of athlete representation and a monumental name change to best encapsulate the athletes we represent. Team USA AC made strides in its ability to serve its' athlete constituency best by expanding its resources available to athletes and National Governing Bodies (NGBs) Athletes Advisory Councils (AACs) and Internally Managed Sports (IMS) Athletes' Advisory Groups (AAGs) and engaging deeper and with more stakeholders than ever before.

In 2023 Team USA AC worked to improve athlete representation in sport governance from the NGB level up to the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC), advocated for athletes on a variety of critical issues, testified at a Congressional Commission, appointed athlete representatives to various committees and supported Team USA on the ground at the 2023 Pan American and Parapan American Games. Team USA AC is proud of what it has accomplished in 2023.

This year was pivotal in laying the groundwork for modernizing the athlete body by advocating for Team USA AC independence from the USOPC, which will be a major focus of the group's advocacy work in 2024. Independence would be a monumental step for all Team USA athletes, and a long-awaited change in the right direction to ensure a truly empowered athletes' voice within the Movement.



**TEAM USA ATHLETES'
COMMISSION**

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1. TEAM USA AC BACKGROUND

Team USA AC serves as the representative group and voice of Team USA athletes. Per the Ted Stevens Act (the Act), in governance and conducting its affairs, the USOPC shall provide for reasonable representation of amateur athletes, defined as actively engaged or who have represented US in international competition in the preceding 10 years, including establishing an Athletes' Advisory Council (AAC) (now known as Team USA AC), which is composed of and elected by such athletes.

Team USA AC serves as a source of athlete opinion and advice to the USOPC Board regarding current and contemplated policies of the USOPC and to help ensure a strong and effective athlete voice in corporate governance. The primary role of Team USA AC is to advocate for and empower the athletes' voice, empower Team USA to inspire and drive positive change, and appoint athlete reps to various committees, working groups, and task forces.

Mission: To ensure communication between the USOPC and athletes who are actively engaged in amateur athletic competition or who have represented the United States in international competition within the preceding ten (10) years.

Vision: Represent the athlete voice and empower Team USA to inspire and drive positive change.

Core Values: The Team USA AC will advance its mission, vision, and strategic priorities through commitment to the following values:



Note: Team USA AC believes this mission does not capture the true nature of Team USA AC's role. However, the above is what is codified in the USOPC Bylaws, and our Bylaws cannot be in conflict with the USOPC Bylaws. We believe our mission should be "To serve as the representative voice of all Team USA athletes." Team USA AC asks Congress to adopt the Congressional Commission on the State of U.S. Olympic and Paralympics (CSUOP) recommendation six which states "Congress should strengthen athletes' representation by making the Team USA Athletes' Commission fully independent" (more details about independence in Section 10). Because Team USA AC is not an independent entity, it cannot amend its own mission statement. Currently, changing the mission statement could only occur if the USOPC Board of Directors approves a bylaw change. This is one of many reasons Congress should amend the Ted Stevens Act and make Team USA AC independent.

PRIORITIES

The following pillars and strategies represent the 2021-2024 priorities for Team USA AC to focus time, energy, and effort on to advance its purpose and principles and achieve future success.

Organizational Excellence & Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Member Engagement & Cultural Transformation• Team USA AC Resources & Support
Team USA Athlete Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Athlete Voice Amplification• Athlete Financial Health• Athlete Representation & Good Governance• Transition Support
Awareness & Brand Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Telling Our Story• Digital/Media Presence
Stakeholder Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Athlete Community• NGB Internal AACs• NGBs• USOPC• USOPC• Anti-doping Advocates

COMPOSITION

Team USA AC is composed of: (1) six members of leadership- one chair, two vice-chairs and three at-large representatives; and (2) 64 general representatives, (3) one athlete and one alternate from each NGB, (4) six Paralympic general athletes and (5) ex-officio members from the IOC Athletes Commission and IPC Athletes' Council. Additionally, for 2023, the Commission had two support staff members - an executive director and a manager (an additional staff member was added at the start of 2024).

2. STRATEGIC PLANNING

Background

In the second half of 2020, Team USA AC initiated the strategic planning process for the 2021-2024 quadrium. Current and past leaders participated in the initial drafting of the plan by participating in a survey that identified the top Team USA AC strengths and weaknesses, influential environmental factors and barriers, key opportunities and challenges, and the vision for strategic success. After conducting feedback and discussion sessions with the reps at our February 2021 Athletes' Forum the plan was finalized.

Below are some of the highlights from the plan including a new vision statement, core values, and priorities. The complete strategic plan can be found in Appendix I. Team USA AC Staff, with leadership, also developed an internal Strategic Operating Plan that details initiatives, action steps and success measures for each strategic priority listed in the plan. We continue to evaluate and track on the completion of all of our tactics for each priority.

2023 Strategic Progress

Team USA AC activated on each of its strategic priorities by executing various pointed initiatives. With a majority of the Quad behind us, the AC is on track to make significant strategic progress in the service of athletes. Below are strategic initiatives accomplished in 2023 organized by strategic priority.



ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE & SUSTAINABILITY

Team USA AC Resources & Support: Even without amending the MOU we were able to expand some of our resources

- **Expand Funding Model:** increase allocated budget from the USOPC; however, Team USA AC did not get the full amount requested.
- **Athlete Advocacy:** have professional outside experts serve and assist Team USA AC when applicable. They included experts in athlete representation, media and legal.
- **Secure Funding for the New Coordinator Position:** Hiring process started in 2023 and individual started in January 2024

TEAM USA ATHLETE SUCCESS

Athlete Voice Amplification

Establish a strong communication channel between Team USA and the Congressional Commission

- Created a dedicated Task Force consisting of five athletes
- Maintained communication with the Commission co-chairs and staff to make sure Team USA AC voice is heard
- Outlined main athlete concerns to provide to the Commission
- Provided the Commission with Team USA AC Recommendations and Feedback
- Helped the Commission push out survey communications to the Team USA athlete community

Athlete Financial Health

Educate athletes about the commercial landscape:
Developed Commercial Marketplace Services:

- Developed endorsement checklist that launched Q1 2024
- Set up 1-1 consultant service for athletes
- NGB Athlete Agreement Education (in-progress)

Transition Support

Collaborate with USOPC to Develop Athlete Fellowship Program: Since 2020, Team USA AC expressed the need for such a program. Even though we are not involved in the program as originally asked, we still hope it successfully helps athletes in transition

Athlete Representation & Good Governance

Establish relationships with Professional Sport League Unions (WNBPA, NFLPA, NHLPA) (continuing to improve)

AWARENESS AND BRAND PROMOTION

Increase athlete community communication:

- Develop a Monthly Newsletter

Telling our story and Digital/Media Presence:

- New Branding
- Celebrating 50 Years of the Team USA AC: Content Telling the Story & celebrating with past leadership members
- Updating the website with regards to Team USA AC Content (continuing to improve)

STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS

NGB Partnership

Direct staff engagement with NGB CEOs (in-progress)

USOPC Collaboration

- Create clarity in the USOPC Bylaws on the requirement that the Team USA AC is the appointment body for all athlete representatives on USOPC working groups, task forces and committees (presented and advocated to the USOPC Board of Directors on Team USA AC's stance)
- Develop Athlete Resources Clarifying Roles (Athlete Touchpoints document) (Started, but never finalized)
- Increase USOPC staff awareness of Team USA AC by including information in onboarding and hosting a Team Talk (in-progress)

Athlete Community Engagement

Increase Athlete Engagement: Athlete Lounge at the Colorado Springs Olympic and Paralympic Training Center

INCOMPLETE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (MOVED TO 2024)

Even though we accomplished a great deal in 2023 we would like to acknowledge all the goals we set out to accomplish that were not met. Due to the collegiate advocacy work that arose in 2023 and to ensure the Team USA athlete voice was heard at the Congressional level, there were strategic priorities that were planned for 2023 that the Team USA AC did not have the bandwidth to achieve. Team USA AC made some prioritization adjustments based on the above-mentioned events.

- **Awareness & Brand Promotion:**

- Expand Social Media Presence:

- Develop a social media strategy (moved to Q1 2024)
- Create formalized social media templates (moved to Q1 2024)

- Increase Athlete community communication

- Launch a Podcast (moved to 2025)

- **Team USA Athlete Success: Transition Support**

- Help Athlete Reps use service as a step in their career transition: Develop Athlete Representation Job Board (moved to 2025)



3. PROFESSIONALIZATION

Name Change and Re-Branding

It is important to note that even though Team USA AC is officially called the USOPC Athletes' Advisory Council (USOPC AAC) in the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act, the Team USA AC underwent a name change in 2023 and is now known the Team USA Athletes' Commission.

The former name, USOPC AAC, does not convey being a group of athletes for athletes. The new name better reflects the athlete-centric mission and values of the commission. It signifies that Team USA AC is comprised of and is representative of Team USA athletes.

The language "Athletes' Commission" aligns with athlete organizations on the international stage and will reduce confusion domestically at the NGB level as NGBs are required to have their own internal AACs. This has caused confusion in documentation and communication within the USOPC community. Team USA Athletes' Commission is a title that best captures the group of athletes Team USA AC represents. The name provides clarity domestically and continuity internationally among other athlete groups.

Because we are not an independent entity, it was required we use a USOPC approved vendor to design the new logo. Team USA AC worked closely with the USOPC communications team and external firm, Axio in developing a logo to go with the new name "Team USA Athletes' Commission." Team USA AC Leadership was presented with six logos and provided notes and feedback to Axio, which came back with updated designs. Leadership narrowed it down to two logos for Team USA AC reps to vote on at our May 2023 Meeting. Team USA AC launched its new name and logo in June of 2023.

TEAM USA AC LOGO

Team USA AC brand mark embodies the essence of our organization’s mission and vision. It reflects our commitment to ensuring communication between the USOPC and actively engaged athletes and represents the athlete voice that empowers Team USA to inspire and drive positive change.

- It features a vibrant flame element symbolizing energy and a dynamic human figure showcasing athletes’ values. With its inclusive design, the mark promotes genderless representation, emphasizing inclusivity and accessibility in sports.
- It stands as a symbol of unity, resilience, and the pursuit of excellence within Team USA AC.

There is work that needs to be done to finalize branding and marketing guidelines that are currently still with the USOPC Marketing and Guidelines Group. It is important to note the Team USA AC will be requesting Congress and the USOPC transfer all the rights to the names and marks of the Team USA AC to the Team USA AC once it becomes an independent organization from the USOPC (more details about independence in Section 10 of this report).



SIZZLE REEL

Although Team USA AC has existed for 50 years, awareness is low among the Team USA athlete community and other Movement stakeholders. It wasn't until July of 2020 that Team USA AC was provided professional staff and empowered to work for athletes. To help improve this issue, Team USA AC worked with our media consultant and a video production company to create an informative, inspiring, and captivating overview of the Team USA Athletes' Commission that conveys who we are and what we do in support of Team USA athletes. The two major uses for the video are: (1) Welcome video in the onboarding new Team USA Athletes, USOPC employees and other stakeholders; and (2) to educate athletes on different medias including our website, the athlete portal, social media and during various athlete engagements. [Click Here to View Video](#)

4. ENGAGEMENTS

Team USA Athletes

As previously mentioned, Team USA AC has an awareness issue with stakeholders. Over the years, trust with athletes and other stakeholders has been broken because of scandals, doping and other matters. We acknowledge that trust is improving but it is important that athletes know the Team USA AC is the sole group that exists to advocate specifically for and on behalf of athletes. As such, Team USA AC strives to interact with as many athletes as it can under its current structure.

Team USA AC

Consistent and open dialogue between leadership, the representatives and staff to ensure the athlete voice is heard within the Movement is paramount to the success of Team USA AC. The Team USA AC engages with our members through a variety of different channels including but not limited to bi-monthly leadership meetings, two Athletes' Forums (May and September in 2023), USOPC Assembly, monthly meetings, and staff one-on-one meetings with representatives to provide additional support. Additionally, Team USA AC utilizes Slack, an online communication platform and emails regularly with the membership to conduct commission work.

Beyond those meetings with the body our Leadership team meets every three weeks at a minimum, our Chair has bi-weekly meetings with staff and Leadership connects with all USOPC Athlete Directors before and after all quarterly USOPC Board meetings.



NGB AACs/ IMS Athlete Advisory Groups (AAG) & Athlete Townhalls

For the Team USA AC to be successful and for athlete representation within the Movement to be strong, NGB AACs and IMS AAG's must also be empowered. Team USA AC has made a concerted effort to have more interactions with these sport athlete groups and developed an AAC/AAG training and resource (more details about governance in Section 5 of this report). We have received positive feedback and our goal moving forward is to increase the scope and scale of these trainings. Beyond the trainings, Team USA AC increased its support to NGB AACs/IMS AAGs and athletes at the sport level. That support included:

Weightlifting	Staff presented during an AAC meeting to onboard the AAC on their role as athlete representative members, educate them on the U.S. representative ecosystem and educate them on the role of the Team USA AC as well as the support we can provide.
Para Powerlifting	The AC supported and met with athletes as they navigated the decertification of their former NGB and became an IMS by the USOPC. Staff supported during USOPC Athlete Townhalls.
Para Swimming	The AC met multiple times with the AAG and provided support during the USOPC Athlete Townhalls regarding the serious allegations leveled against a former US Paralympic Swimming Team member.
Skateboarding	The AC supported athletes as they navigated the decertification of their former NGB and became an IMS by the USOPC. Staff met with them at the CSOPTC during a national team camp and supported them during USOPC Athlete Townhalls.

NGB AACs/ IMS Athlete Advisory Groups (AAG) & Athlete Townhalls (continued)

Rugby	Staff presented during an AAC meeting to onboard the AAC on their role as athlete representative members, educate them on the U.S. representative ecosystem and educate them on the role of the Team USA AC as well as the support we can provide the AAC.
US Ski & Snowboard	Staff participated in an Athlete Townhall in collaboration with the USOPC and the NGB regarding the integration of US Para Alpine and US Para Snowboard into US Ski & Snowboard.
Hockey	Staff attended an in-person AAC meeting during their Annual Meeting to provide support to the group and help answer questions the athletes had regarding the Congressional Commission on the State of U.S. Olympics and Paralympics.
Bobsled/ Skeleton	Staff presented during an AAC meeting to onboard the AAC on their role as athlete representative members, educate them on the U.S. representative ecosystem and educate them on the role of the Team USA AC as well as the support we can provide the AAC.

CSOPTC

Having our offices onsite at the Colorado Springs Olympic and Paralympic Training Center provides a huge opportunity for athlete engagements as teams come for national team camps, selection camps, etc. and meet with resident athletes. Athlete groups we have met with in 2023 include:

- Wrestling
- Triathlon
- Skateboarding
- Team Handball (Men's)
- Boccia
- Swimming
- Para Swimming
- Boxing
- Wheelchair Basketball (Men's & Women's)
- Track and Field
- Para Alpine
- Para Powerlifting
- Ski Mountaineering
- Gymnastics- Men's Artistic

Events

Team USA AC tactfully thinks about engagement points and the events that present opportunities to connect with athletes. The major competitions we attended in 2023, included:

- **World University Games**
- **Weightlifting Nationals**
- **Curling Nationals**
- **Four Continents Figure Skating Championship**
- **Para Swimming World Series**
- **Para Track & Field Nations**
- **Santiago 2023**
 - **Pan American Games**
 - Men's and Women's Water polo
 - Track and Field
 - Artistic Swimming
 - Breaking
 - Men's and Women's Beach Volleyball
 - Sailing
 - 3x3 Basketball
 - Swimming
 - Women's Field Hockey
 - Men's and Women's Squash
 - Men's and Women's Racquetball
 - Table Tennis
 - Softball
 - Fencing
 - **Parapan American Games**
 - Men's and Women's Goalball
 - Men's and Women's Wheelchair Basketball
 - Powerlifting
 - Swimming
 - Track and Field
 - Wheelchair Rugby
 - Wheelchair Tennis



International Athletes' Commissions

It is a priority of Team USA AC to stay abreast of the work of international athletes' commissions, provide feedback to those bodies on behalf of Team USA AC and support our Team USA athletes that serve on such commissions.

WADA AC	<p>Team USA AC had multiple touchpoints with the newly elected World Anti-Doping Agency Athletes' Commission (WADA AC) Representative Clare Egan (Biathlon). When she was first elected, we provided her with an onboarding on the AC's stance of WADA reforms and of our anti-doping advocacy efforts. Staff also met with her at the World University Games, Santiago Pan American Games and she attended our meetings at Assembly.</p>
PanAm AC	<p>Team US AC engaged with Pan American Athletes' Commission's (PanAm AC) Rep Tony Azevedo (Water Polo) and invited him to attend our in-person meetings.</p>
IOC AC	<p>Team USA AC engaged with International Olympic Committee Athletes' Commission (IOC AC) appointee Allyson Felix (Track & Field) through updates on the Team USA AC's stance on athlete issues for her to raise at the international level, most notably in 2023 leading into the Paris Games was Russian Athlete Participation. Team USA AC also nominated Felix to be the US candidate to run for the IOC AC election at the Paris 2024 Games</p> <p>Team USA AC Chair, Mark Ladwig attended the IOC AC Athletes' Forum in Lausanne, Switzerland and staff / leadership attended all IOC AC Global Athlete Meetings.</p>
IPC AC	<p>Team USA AC Vice Chair, Chuck Aoki attended the International Paralympic Committee Athletes' Council (IPC AC) Athletes' Forum in South Korea and staff / leadership attended all IPC AC Global Athlete Meetings.</p> <p>Additionally, Executive Director met with IPC staff in March in 2023 at their offices in Bonn Germany.</p>

U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Alumni Association (USOPA)

Team USA AC collaborates with USOPA on a variety of athlete issues and initiatives. USOPA and the Team USA AC had a joint meeting at Assembly and invited the USOPA liaison to attend all Team USA AC meetings. Furthermore, through the Joint Nominating Committee we jointly appointed a “10 Year+” athlete to the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Endowment Board.

U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC)

The relationship between the Team USA AC and USOPC staff is paramount to ensure the athlete voice is heard. To engage with the USOPC, the Team USA AC Chair has bi-monthly meetings with the USOPC CEO and USOPC National Governing Body Council (NGBC) Leadership. Team USA AC staff meets bi-weekly with USOPC Athlete Learning and Development staff. Team USA AC Executive Director meets regularly with the USOPC CEO. Additionally, the Team USA AC staff communicates daily with USOPC staff and has monthly touch bases with USOPC Communications. Often Team USA AC and USOPC will jointly release statements.

Furthermore, Leadership has bi-monthly meetings that feature USOPC staff updates given by leaders from variety of departments including Athlete Learning and Development, Ombudsman, Ethics & Compliance, and Diversity Equity & Inclusion. USOPC staff is also invited to provide updates on Team USA AC monthly calls and at all in-person Team USA AC meetings.

To improve the dialogue between Team USA AC and the USOPC Board of Directors the AC invited board members to a round table discussion at Assembly where representatives got to speak directly to board members. This conversation proved so useful that the plan is to have it occur at each Assembly.

Anti-Doping

On the antidoping front it is vital that the Team USA AC has consistent engagement with other key stakeholders:

USADA

Team USA AC regularly engages with USADA to keep its representatives informed and partner on joint initiatives where appropriate. USADA presented at Assembly. Our collaborative advocacy efforts included but were not limited to pushing for the Beijing 2022 Figure Skaters impacted by the Russian doping case to get their gold medals, and advocating to ensure that the testing of Russian Athletes was occurring even though Russia's Anti-doping agency is noncompliant. Staff also attended USADA's NGB Clean Sport Summit.

WADA

Team USA AC continually tracks the work related to the reform of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) so that the organization can become a strong, independent anti-doping regulator and protector of clean athletes' rights. All athletes have been promised the opportunity for a fair, safe, and level-playing field and WADA must transform itself immediately to deliver on this agreement. In 2023 we participated in the WADA Code Feedback process in the hope our feedback is considered to improve the system.

Furthermore, we submitted a joint letter to WADA with Athleten Deutschland, Norway Athletes' Commission, The Norwegian Players' Association, Dutch Olympic Committee Athletes Commission, and Denmark Athletes' Commission regarding Testing of Russian and Belarusian Athletes.

We also sent a joint Letter with the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), USOPC and USADA submitting our joint endorsement for candidates' positions on WADA Standing Committees.

WADA (continued)

Anti-doping stakeholders from the U.S. joined together in endorsing these highly qualified candidates, Dr. Matthew Fedoruk, USADA Chief Science Officer, for another term on the WADA Health, Medical, and Research Committee, and Dr. Jennifer Royer, USADA Director of TrueSport and Elite Athlete Education, for a position on the WADA Education Committee.

Team USA AC Chair and Executive director attended the WADA Symposium, which is a conference bringing together anti-doping practitioners from International Federations, National and Regional Anti-Doping Organizations and Major Event Organizations; as well as, Athletes, Governments, WADA-accredited laboratories, Athlete Passport Management Units, service providers, researchers, and the media – to help advance the global collaborative mission for doping-free sport.

ONDCP

Similarly, as with USADA, Team USA AC communicates with the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), on policies impacting athletes. Team USA AC regularly engages with the ONDCP to ensure the office is aware of the US athlete's voice. We provided feedback to Dr. Gupta, Director of the ONDCP and Richard Baum, ONDCP Senior Policy Analyst on the emerging threats about WADA and the testing of Russian athletes. Specifically in September 2023, staff met with Dr. Gupta to discuss Team USA AC concerns regarding the Valieva Case and other anti-doping matters.

The U.S. Center for SafeSport “the Center”

Team USA AC is continuously tracking the work the Center is doing as it greatly impacts the athlete community. To stay abreast of the Center's policy changes, staff attended the 2023 SafeSport NGB Summit. Also, the staff and Chair met with April Holmes, PLY, Chairperson of the Center's Board of Directors, and Holmes introduced herself to our athlete body at Assembly.

5. GOVERNANCE

Ensuring that the athlete voice is properly elevated and heard at all processes and policies that impact athletes is a major component of the work the Team USA AC. Team USA AC is consistently advocating for more athlete-centric procedures to be implemented throughout the Movement.

Team USA AC Bylaw Revisions

As we have grown as an organization, we have recognized and made some needed changes to our bylaws. During the May 2023 Team USA AC Bylaw Revision, a provision was added around meeting attendance. This language was in our previous Code of Conduct but was removed because we are covered under the USOPC Code of Conduct. Critical Team USA AC work happens at meetings and now there is codified language about a Representative's duty to participate and attend Team USA AC meetings.

At the 2023 Assembly, Team USA AC had a dedicated session with its athlete body to get feedback on potential changes relating to Team USA AC composition and eligibility. Those potential changes were then considered during the January 2024 Bylaw Review process.



USOPC BYLAW CHANGES

At the June 2023 USOPC Board Meeting, the Team USA AC presented its' athlete representation philosophy and requested the USOPC makes bylaw revisions aligned with our philosophy. Athlete representation at the USOPC level is inconsistent with obligations NGBs must follow to be in good standing with the USOPC. Team USA AC serves as the representative voice of Team USA athletes, and we believe that should be reflected in the election/selection and eligibility requirements of athlete representatives. To best serve athletes, Team USA AC, which gets its athlete representation power from the Ted Stevens Act (the Act), should be the group charged with the election and selection of all athlete representatives and there should not be a mandatory requirement of having "10 Year+" athletes on boards, committees, working groups or task forces. We presented the below bylaw changes to the board:

- **Athlete Representation at the USOPC**

- **Eligibility:** All USOPC "10-Year+" Athlete Representative seats from the Board down to all working groups, committees, and task forces should be revised to At-Large Athlete Seats with the eligibility requirements being "10-year or 10-year+ athlete seats."
- **Selection:** All elected athlete members of USOPC boards (i.e. U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Endowment Board) should be elected by the Team USA AC representatives and all USOPC working groups, committees, and task forces athlete members should be selected by the Team USA AC.

- **USOPC Board of Directors At-large athlete members**

- **Eligibility:** Must be a "10-year" or "10-year+" athlete.
- **Selection:** Must go through the Team USA AC Nominations and Governance Committee Process and then candidates will be directly elected by the Team USA AC representatives.

However, no changes have been made and Team USA AC was not presented with a rationale for why no changes have been made. The Board has not made any changes, and that negatively impacts the 2025-2028 Quad election cycle, which commences Summer 2024. Team USA AC finds it unacceptable that this was not a priority for the Board when they had ample time to update the bylaws or at the bare minimum tell their most important constituents, the athletes, why no such action was taken. The issues outlined above further support the need for an independent Team USA AC.

NGB AAC/IMS AAG Support

In 2023, Team USA AC made a concerted effort to provide vertical support to each sports athlete body by providing additional service and resources including: (1) media consultation, (2) AAC/AAG trainings, and (3) AAC/AAG resources.

- **Media Consultation:** Team USA AC now offers the support of our retained Media Consultant to NGB AACs and IMS AACs by aiding those groups in their communication strategy and in the drafting of their own statements. The AC has received positive feedback from athletes of the usefulness of this service. It is important for these athlete groups to have access to communication or public relations resources free and clear of any conflict of interest with their respective NGBs or the USOPC.
- **AAC/AAG Training:** Team USA AC developed a comprehensive AAC/AAG training to educate athletes that serve on those committees. We conduct these trainings virtually and cover:
 - Athlete Representation 101
 - Team USA AC
 - Governance
 - Ensuring Athlete Voice
 - AAC/AAG Requirements & Best Practices
- **AAC/AAG Resources:** In conjunction with the above-mentioned trainings, we developed a suite of resources including:
 - NGB AAC + IMS AAG Guide
 - AAC Charter Template (Created in conjunction with the USOPC)
 - Meeting Minutes Resource
 - Guide to Athlete Reports
 - Templates: Agenda and Job Description

Athlete Representation Working Group

Based on provisions in the USOPC Bylaws, the Athlete Representation Working Group reviews requests from NGBs for exemptions from the requirements for athlete representation. The working group is comprised of representatives from NGBs, Team USA AC, and the NGB AAC. The AC and USOPC staff provide support to the group.

In 2023 four panels were held to ensure that all NGB committees and competitions are compliant. From a Team USA AC perspective, the committee's work has been hugely impactful in finding ways to make the increase from 20% to 33% in athlete representation on all committees, working groups, task forces, etc., attainable and realistic. Team USA AC hopes that future athlete representation in the Olympic and Paralympic Movement domestically will be at a place where the work of this Working Group is needed less and less.

Equal Pay Act Feedback

Congress amended the Ted Stevens Act through the Equal Pay for Team USA Act. These amendments require action from both the USOPC and the NGBs to ensure gender equity in multiple categories of consideration that athletes may receive from NGBs, including compensation, wages, benefits, medical care, travel arrangements, and reimbursements. One requirement is that NGBs provide detailed annual reporting to Congress about the stipends and bonuses paid to athletes disaggregated by gender, race, and professional team status.

A working group of NGB and USOPC stakeholders was convened to discuss the new requirements, and a suggestion was made that in addition to the content required by the legislation for annual reports, NGBs could also add reporting that identifies all athletes receiving NGB funding by name and disclosing the amount of funding received by each athlete in the past calendar year. As this is not required by the law, the working group wanted to understand athlete views on this issue and presented the below question with the corresponding results:

Would you support NGBs disclosing the names and total funding amounts received for all athletes receiving NGB funding in the new annual reports to Congress required by the Equal Pay for Team USA Act? While these reports are not required by law to be made publicly available, it is likely that the reports would be published by NGBs and/or Congress.

- **Yes 67.5%**
- **No 25%**
- **Abstain 7.5%**

Despite this feedback, the USOPC decided NGBs would not be required to disclose names based on the feedback the USOPC received from the AC and the NGBs. The rationale given was that because it is not required by the law, and there were varied opinions on whether it was helpful or not, the USOPC thought it was something that each NGB should be able to decide. NGBs are not barred from reporting, just not required by law or the USOPC.

Elections and Appointments

A significant part of the Team USA AC role in governance is the appointment of athlete representatives to serve on a variety of working groups, committees and task forces across the Movement. For all athlete representative positions, Team USA AC runs a robust nomination and appointment process that involves a call for nominations, a thorough review of application materials by either Team USA AC Leadership or the Team USA AC Nominations and Governance Committee and interviews when appropriate.

For the more significant athlete representative positions, like Board of Director positions or international appointments the entire body votes to determine the candidate. Below are the representatives the Team USA AC appointed in 2023:



- USOPC Background Check and Review Panel (one athlete)
- U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Endowment Athlete Director (appointed one 10-Year Athlete to the Board and jointly appointed with USOPA one 10-Year+ Athlete)
- Team USA AC Congressional Commission Task Force (five athletes)
- IOC AC US Nominee: sought nominations for the U.S. candidate to run for a seat on the IOC AC to be voted upon by athletes at the 2024 Paris Olympics

6. ATHLETE ADVOCACY

Anti-Doping

Advocating for clean sport and fair play is a global effort. During the 2022 Beijing Games, the Team USA Figure skating team event, athletes were negatively impacted and denied a medal ceremony when it was determined that a Russian athlete tested positive for a banned substance.



Since the closing of those Games, Team USA AC has been advocating for our U.S. Figure Skating athletes to receive their gold medals. In February 2023, on the anniversary of what should have been the figure skating Team Event medal ceremony, we released a statement calling for clean athletes who deserve the long overdue recognition of their accomplishments to receive their Olympic moment. We have been working to ensure clean athletes are awarded the medals that they rightfully deserve (Appendix 2).

Additionally, WADA initiated step one of its' 2027 Code Update. The Code Drafting Team identified nine concepts for the upcoming revision of the Code and Team USA AC worked in consultation with USADA to provide feedback on those concepts. We plan on providing feedback at all stages of the Code review process.

Transgender Athlete Inclusion

Transgender and non-binary athlete participation in sport has become a fiercely debated topic globally. To make an informed statement on the issue in 2022, Team USA AC put in the work to educate itself on the issue and take the pulse of the athlete community. The Team USA AC worked with Athlete Ally, a nonprofit LGBTQ athletic advocacy group that focuses on making athletic communities more inclusive and less discriminatory and helping athletes to advocate for LGBTQ equality. Athlete Ally provided athlete representatives with an education session focused on transgender and non-binary athletes.

THE AAC OPPOSES H.R. 734

"The AAC opposes any attempt to marginalize, limit or deny human rights and is on the side of inclusion of all participants in youth sports. Banning transgender and nonbinary kids from sports ostracizes from a fundamental part of growing up and all the benefits sports provide to youth."

This work helped inform the AC in the drafting of its June 2022 Statement on transgender and nonbinary athlete inclusion (Appendix 3). This statement was voted and approved by the members of Team USA AC and was used to provide the feedback to the USOPC on their work around the transgender athlete policy, which is not in full alignment with the Team USA AC statement.

As a direct result of the Team USA AC's June 2022 Statement on transgender and nonbinary athlete inclusion, Team USA AC was contacted by Congressman Hakeem Jeffries' office regarding H.R. 734. H.R. 743 did not align with the Team USA AC 2022 position and Team USA AC submitted an opposition letter to the Bill. The blanket exclusion that H.R. 734 mandated for every age, every sport, and every level of competition was contrary to Title IX's mandate of equal access to educational opportunities.

Commission on the State of the U.S. Olympics & Paralympics

In 2020 Congress established the bipartisan Commission on the State of U.S. Olympics and Paralympics (CSUSOP) with the goal of addressing systemic challenges. The CSUSOP was tasked with studying the Olympic and Paralympic Movement in this country, evaluating the effectiveness of its governing institutions, and setting out a new vision for the Movement to succeed moving forward. This was a once-in-a-generation chance to revisit the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act and other foundations of the Movement.

To ensure Team USA athlete voices were heard by the CSUSOP, the Team USA AC Commission had CSUSOP present at our Spring 2023 Athletes' Forum and solicited feedback directly from our Athlete Representatives. Team USA AC also made a very concerted effort to have as many Team USA Athletes as possible participate in the survey the Commission put out to solicit athlete feedback. Those efforts included: Athlete Representative communications to their respective athlete constituents, dedicated Team USA AC email communications, social media campaigns and grassroots efforts.



Commission on the State of the U.S. Olympics & Paralympics (continued)

Team USA AC created a Task Force dedicated to our work as it related to the CSUSOP. The Task Force served as an internal advisory group for Team USA AC, providing relevant athlete feedback to the CSUSOP.

The Task Force work included, but was not limited to: (1) Soliciting, synthesizing and sharing feedback from elite athletes to the Team USA AC and to the CSUSOP (2) Advocating for the welfare, safety and fair treatment of elite athletes within the Movement; (3) Liaising with the larger Team USA AC, as required; (4) Reviewing and providing feedback on policies, procedures and/or issues as requested by the CSUSOP staff and Commissioners; (5) Assisting with all document requests from the CSUSOP; and; (6) Other duties as they related to requests from, and the work of, the CSUSOP to ensure the athlete voice and voice of the Team USA AC was heard. This work culminated in a paper submitted to the CSUSOP to help inform their Final Report, released March 1, 2024.

Task Force Members included:

- Chuck Aoki (Wheelchair Rugby), representing Team USA AC Leadership (Task Force Chair)
- Christopher Kinney (Bobsled), representing Olympic Athletes
- Erev King (Para Dressage & Para Archery), representing Paralympic Athletes
- Morgan Fuller Kolsrud (Artistic Swimming), representing Pan American Athletes
- Patrick Parkes (Boccia), representing Parapan American Athletes

Additionally, Team USA AC Executive Director, Elizabeth Ramsey testified on behalf of Team USA AC (Appendix 4). Her testimony echoed what was submitted on behalf of our task force and called on Congress for assistance in giving Team USA AC the support it needs to be impactful, more effective, and better recognized within the Movement by amending the Ted Stevens Act codifying Team USA AC independence from the USOPC. Chuck Aoki, Team USA AC Vice chair, testified as well but in an individual capacity regarding Paralympic sport

Collegiate Advocacy

In 2023 Team USA AC spent time working to protect broad base sport on college campuses. Team USA AC supports providing as much money, benefits and services to athletes but not without ensuring protections are in place to protect non-revenue sports. It is imperative to our athletes that the Team USA pipeline is protected, and that broad base sporting opportunities are not reduced.

CA ABA 252

In conjunction with the USOPC, Team USA AC engaged in a comprehensive successful advocacy effort to prevent ABA 252 from passing in 2023. The bill attempts to redirect athletic funding to student-athletes participating in sports with market value (football and basketball).

The bill also includes elements that significantly impact the student-athlete experience. As written, the requirement to reallocate funding within an athletics department could result in the loss of Olympic sports on campus, and with it, sport opportunities for thousands of student-athletes.

Our concerns with the bill as drafted were vast. AB 252 would threaten opportunities for most California student-athletes to train and compete. An amended version of AB 252 still puts student-athlete opportunities at risk, ignoring inflation and growing costs to support athletes. AB 252 would have also impeded California student-athletes training for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Furthermore, the Title IX amendments to AB 252 do not guarantee funding protections for women and men's sports. The "equal compensation" revisions to bill fail to ensure athlete population growth. Lastly, the broader athlete community was not adequately consulted.



CA ABA 252 (continued)

Our advocacy efforts that stressed the points outlined below:

Letters: Team USA AC sent letters to Assembly member Holden, Assembly Appropriations Committee, Assembly Higher Education Committee, Assembly Floor Alert, Senate Judiciary Committee and Senate Education Committee. Team USA AC also drafted a letter for the larger Team USA Athlete community to sign, which accumulated upwards of 125 signatures. We also drafted a letter template for NGB AAC's to use as they see fit in their advocacy efforts

Social Media Campaign: This social media campaign pushed for athletes to sign on to the above-mentioned letter and was targeted to spread awareness of the unintended negative consequences of the proposed legislation.

Stakeholder Meetings:

- PAC-12 Student Athlete Council members
- Assembly member Holden's Office- Willie Armstrong
- Assembly member Holden's Office- Willie Armstrong & Ramogi Huma, Executive Director of the National College Players Association
- Allison Meredith- Senate Judiciary Committee Meeting (Sen. Umberg)
- Andrew Medina (Sen. Atkins)
- Mae Gates (Sen. Smallwood-Cuevas) w/ USOPC Consultant & Kendall Spencer
- AB 252 Hearings Prep- Erika Bustamante (Stanford)
- Jessica Bartholo (Sen. Skinner) w/ USOPC Consultant, Jen Gallagher, Emily Jenson, Summer and Natalie
- Spencer Rhodes (Sen. Ochoa Bogh) with USOPC Consultant, Jen Gallagher, Emily Jenson
- Brandon, Kristin and Assembly member Erwin w/ USOPC Consultant, Jen Gallagher, Emily Jenson, Kendall Spencer
- Shawnee Walters (Sen. Newman)
- Aaron Skaggs (Sen. Portantino)

Ultimately our work was successful and contributed to the proposed legislation not passing. Team USA AC is continuing this work as bills arise across the country. We hope that more law makers will engage with athlete stakeholders before passing any legislation.

Federal Collegiate Legislation

Team USA AC, with USOPC government relations team, has been monitoring federal NIL bills and their potential impact on the Olympic and Paralympic pipeline. Team USA AC sent a letter to Senator Blumenthal regarding the “College Athlete Protection & Compensation Act (Booker, Blumenthal, Moran)” during the Bills comment period. Team USA AC has been educating and keeping our athlete representatives up to date on the legislation. The AC believes there is much-needed reform and a need to strengthen the collegiate athletics system to ensure athletes get the support and protection they need.

However, the biggest concern with Senator Blumenthal's proposed legislation as written is the uncertainty around the the funding mechanism for the College Athletics Corporation (CAC) and Medical Trust Fund. Many different federal bills have been proposed, and we have been monitoring those pieces of proposed legislation to ensure the Team USA athlete voice is accounted for in policy decisions.

Team USA AC asks that Congress reach out to Team USA AC as the official representative voice of Team USA for feedback on any proposed legislation that could impact athletes to ensure the athlete voice is heard.



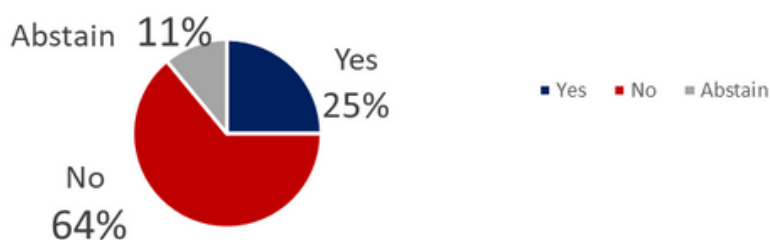
Russian and Belarusian Athlete Participation at the Games

Team USA AC underwent a thorough education, discussion and feedback process regarding the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes in international competitions. The process involved phone calls with USOPC and National Governing Body Council leaderships, participation in the IOC global network of athletes' representatives call, and an athlete feedback survey. The feedback was discussed at the January 2023 Athletes' Forum where representatives weighed several factors including but not limited to:

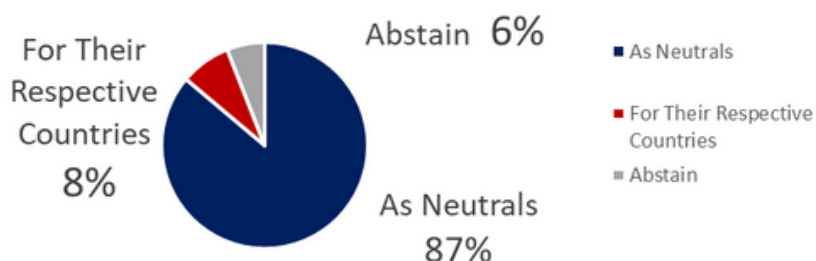
- Solidarity with Ukraine
- Multiple violations of the Olympic Truce
- IOC sanctions
- Unifying mission on the IOC
- Anti-doping concerns
- Athlete rights, neutrality
- Concerns regarding discrimination based on nationality
- Competition pathway

After engaging in productive dialogue and listening to perspectives from across the movement, each Team USA AC athlete representative was given the opportunity to have their voice heard through the following survey. Since the IOC is the governing body deciding on the participation of these athletes, the results were shared with the IOC Athletes Commission.

Do you believe Russian and Belarusian athletes should be able to compete in international competitions?



If the IOC/IPC determines that Russian and Belarusian athletes are able to compete in international competitions, do you think they should compete as neutrals (i.e. as white, no flag, no ROC) or for their respective countries (Russia or Belarus):



Paralympic Sport

IPC Classification

Team USA AC provided feedback to the IPC during their Consultation Phase 3 of its' Classification Code Review Process. To gather relevant feedback, the Team USA AC staff asked Team USA Athletes to provide feedback through our newsletter, worked closely with our Paralympic reps and USOPC Paralympic Staff to educate themselves on the Code. Our goal with providing feedback is to improve the system for all athletes by improving fairness and transparency of the classification process.

USOPC Intellectual Impairment Athlete Policy & Procedure Working Group

The Team USA AC Executive Director was an active participant on the USOPC working group charged with developing an Intellectual Impairment (II) Athlete Policy and Procedure. This group was formed due to the USOPC not having a consistent system in place for II athletes to participate in sport in a safe and inclusive environment.



Athlete Commercial Rights

Athletes' commercial rights have been a hot-button issue with the rise of Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) in the collegiate space. However, many people and Congress are less aware of the NIL and commercial rights issues that are at the forefront of the Olympic and Paralympic Movement. Similarly, large institutions and businesses bring in millions of dollars in revenue from the efforts of athletes while the athletes themselves only receive a fraction of these earnings. It is a priority of Team USA AC to advocate and protect Team USA athletes' commercial rights and ensure policies are drafted with their best interests in mind.

Commercial Resource Working Group

Team USA AC has been an active participant in the Commercial Resource Working Group along with the USOPC, USOPP, and NGBs. In 2023, this group finalized a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Community Guidelines. These guidelines outline how each party can use commercial and intellectual property rights. Team USA AC clarified that it does not represent all Team USA athletes or bind them to these guidelines.

Our priorities were to protect athletes' NIL, clarify commercial vs. non-commercial use, prevent overuse of NIL for fundraising, and allow athletes to use USOPC event imagery non-commercially.

In 2024, Team USA AC decided not to sign the guidelines, believing they did not align with our strategic priorities. We proposed adding: "The Team USA AC was involved in developing the guidelines but ultimately decided not to endorse them." The USOPC omitted this without explanation.

We believe this highlights the need for Team USA AC's independence. Athletes lack leverage and bargaining power with the USOPC and NGBs, impacting NIL rights. We urge Congress to adopt the CSUOP's recommendation six which states "Congress should strengthen athletes' representation by making the Team USA Athletes' Commission fully independent"

7. SANTIAGO 2023 PAN AMERICAN & PARAPAN AMERICAN GAMES

Supporting Team USA athletes at the Santiago 2023 Pan American and Parapan American Games is one of the Athletes' Commission's most important roles. We are advocates on the ground to assist and support athletes.

Athlete Support

To track support during the Games, Team USA AC staff utilized an intake form that logged athlete information along with detailed notes on the specific issue. Beyond what is listed below regarding support, a Games environment is also a great time for Athletes' Commission staff to build and foster relationships with athletes. *[Note: Because of technical issues that occurred with the form at the start of the Pan Am Games, some support was not captured]*

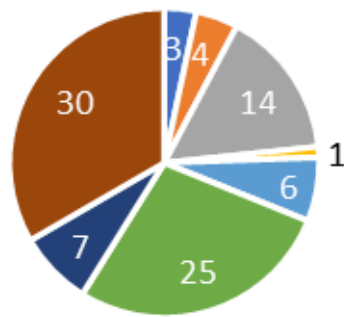
Pan American Games

- 3x3 Basketball: 4
- Archery: 1
- Breaking: 4
- Climbing: 2
- Cycling: 4
- Gymnastics: 1
- Karate: 1
- Men's Field Hockey: 1
- Pentathlon: 1
- Racquetball: 2
- Sailing: 2
- Squash: 1
- Swimming: 2
- Table Tennis: 1
- Taekwondo: 1
- Track and Field: 9
- Water Polo: 2
- Weightlifting: 3
- Women's rugby: 1

Parapan American Games

- Goalball: 6
- Para- Archery: 1
- Para- Football: 2
- Para Badminton: 1
- Para Cycling: 1
- Para Judo: 2
- Shooting: 2
- Soccer: 1
- Swimming: 1
- Track & Field: 7
- Powerlifting: 1
- Wheelchair Basketball: 6
- Wheelchair Rugby: 1
- Wheelchair Tennis: 2

Types of Support



- Anti-Doping: 3
- Athlete Agreements & Endorsements: 4
- Athlete Representation: 14
- Athlete Rights & Responsibilities: 1
- Delegation Policies & Procedures: 6
- General Athlete Support: 25

Athlete Resource Center (ARC)

For both Games, the ARC was housed in the Village and provided athletes access to food, drink, TV's, games and served as a place for athletes to get answers to various questions and general information. The original plan was for the Team USA AC staff to be housed in a room right next to the ARC with a connecting door. But because of a construction issue, the overall ARC space was much smaller and the room the Team USA AC was supposed to be in no longer existed. Without this dedicated space, there was a barrier to interacting with athletes one-on-one as the space was not conducive to having a private and confidential conversation. To have such conversations and interact with athletes, the Athletes' Commission staff had to find other locations to connect with athletes.

A huge part of our job is interacting with athletes so when the space was not there and the AC was put in the USOPC offices instead of trying to find a temporary/flexible seating in the ARC, it impeded our efforts to meet and interact with the athletes.

Regardless, the ARC is a great place for Team USA AC staff to organically introduce themselves to athletes, make them aware of the work of the Team USA AC, and gather athlete feedback on a variety of topics. The advocacy work of Team USA AC requires Team USA athletes to trust the staff and interacting with athletes on the ground at the Games is a great place for staff to build those trusting relationships with athletes.



Flag Bearer Elections

Team USA AC takes running the flag bearer election seriously as carrying our nation's flag into the Opening or Closing Ceremony of an international multi-sport event is an honor bestowed upon only a few athletes. We are unique as a delegation in that our athletes drive the election process and elect the athletes they believe best represent Team USA. The Flag Bearer procedures were developed by Team USA AC with the principles of ensuring a fair athlete-driven process, inclusivity, and collaboration with NGBs/IMSS.

The procedures used for Santiago 2023 mirrored those used for the Tokyo and Beijing Games. The process was distributed to NGB/IMS staff on August 31st, 2023, via a Flag Bear Election Letter. It is important to note that Santiago 2023 dictated the timelines and deadlines for when the names of our flag bearers were due and the number of flag bearers. For these Games, Team USA AC was presented with last-minute adjustments that lead to a more hectic process for all the involved parties (i.e., NGBs, flag bearer nominees, USOPC, Team USA AC).

To address some of the flag bearer problems, it was a point of discussion at our January 2024 Team USA AC athlete forum. One area of improvement is to address NGB/IMG non-compliance with the procedures. Many did not submit their processes on time or submitted ineligible athletes. At the meeting, reps discussed potential solutions to try to resolve these problems including, but not limited to, simplifying the IMS/NGB Process for submitting procedures by creating a uniform process and hosting a pre-Games webinar for team leaders for NGB/IMS staff to walk them through the flag bearer process. The webinar was recently held and is available on-demand for NGB staff.



8. 50TH ANNIVERSARY

In 2023 we celebrated 50 years of the Team USA AC. We celebrated and honored our history, by holding a celebration at Assembly and gifting a 50th anniversary commemorative pin to current members and former leadership.

Team USA AC also launched a social media campaign with previous notable members of our leadership, highlighting athlete representation over the past 50 years. It was important for us to share the message of amplifying the athlete voice and how that has increased over 50 years.

However, Team USA AC tried to collaborate with the USOPC communications and digital team on activating on our anniversary, but there was a disappointing lack of interest in honoring the 50th Anniversary on Team USA platforms. USOPC staff informed Team USA AC that this would not have been fan-facing content. We think this was a missed opportunity to highlight the work the athletes do off the field of play.



9. BARRIERS TO ATHLETE REPRESENTATION

Insufficient Data and 10-Year Athlete List

For years and even prior to Team USA AC having dedicated staff beginning in 2020, obtaining contact information for the athletes the Team USA AC represents has been a challenge. Strides have been made in getting support from the USOPC and NGBC Leadership that contact lists should be provided to representatives, so they have the means to contact their constituency. However, we do not have accurate data to provide to the athlete representatives.

It is a barrier to athlete representation that our representatives do not know whom they represent and how to contact them. The USOPC Bylaws state that the mission of the Team USA AC is “To ensure communication between the USOPC and athletes who are actively engaged in amateur athletic competition or who have represented the United States in international competition within the preceding ten (10) years.” For Team USA AC to fulfil its mission and for the USOPC to also fulfill its Bylaw commitment, we must know who the athletes are that meet the “10-Year Athlete” definition.

Furthermore, it is imperative that this problem is resolved before we start out 2025-2028 Quad Elections starting in June 2024, as accurate 10-year lists are needed to ensure compliance with election procedures. The fact that this information had not existed previously is very concerning because such data was needed to ensure the proper electorate for athlete representative elections.



Memorandum of Understanding & “Lanes Conversation”

In 2022, Team USA AC provided six-month notice to the USOPC for amending the MOU. In October, Team USA AC staff met with USOPC General Counsel and Chief Operating Officer, Chris McCleary to discuss necessary amendments:

- Expand Team USA AC duties in MOU beyond those in Ted Stevens Act and USOPC Bylaws.
- Acknowledge that Team USA AC Bylaws and Strategic Plan extend AAC duties.
- Update language in USOPC Bylaws and Act to reflect Team USA AC's evolution and empowered athlete voice.
- Include language confirming Team USA AC's independence in decision-making.
- Ensure Team USA AC has full autonomy over budget and personnel allocation.

The USOPC General Counsel indicated that the MOU discussion should address the "lanes" for Team USA AC, Athlete Ombuds, and Athlete Services, but these discussions were initiated without conclusion. The lack of an amended MOU was used to explain why the budget of the Team USA AC was not increased to the amount necessary to conduct business for 2024. Shortly thereafter, McCleary reached out to start amending the MOU but Team USA AC informed them they should wait until after the Congressional Committee comes out with its Final Report.

This is another example of why Team USA AC must be independent from the USOPC. Athletes have no leverage and no bargaining power with the USOPC, which is an impediment on athlete rights. The Ted Stevens Act says we must exist but goes no further in defining or codifying our role. As such, we are unempowered and the USOPC takes full advantage of that. To help balance the scales and protect athletes they need an empowered athlete body. Team USA AC asks Congress to adopt the Congressional Commission on the State of U.S. Olympics and Paralympics (CSUSOP) recommendation six which states “Congress should strengthen athletes’ representation by making the Team USA Athletes’ Commission fully independent” (more details about independence in Section 10 of this report).

Team USA AC Independence: Congressional Intervention

On March 1, 2024, the Commission on the State of the United States Olympics and Paralympics (CSUSOP) published its Final Report. The CSUSOP was directed by Congress to conduct a study on the recent reforms undertaken by the USOPC to, among other things, improve the organization's ability to fulfill its mission. The CSUSOP conducted the most comprehensive study of the Movement and its governance ever undertaken. Hundreds of athletes and other participants were interviewed, and issues concerning athlete support, representation, safety, and well-being were at its center. The twelve recommendations included in its final report represent a consensus view on how best to address structural challenges within the movement and make it truly "athlete centered."

The CSUSOP agreed with Team USA AC's recommendation to make Team USA AC completely independent of the USOPC. This is a monumental step for all Team USA athletes, and a long-awaited change in the right direction to ensure a truly empowered athletes' voice within the Movement. Independence for the Team USA AC is in the best interest of athletes and the U.S. sports movement because it will allow the Team USA AC to fulfill its duty as suggested by the Commission to protect and empower athletes.



Team USA AC Independence: Congressional Intervention (continued)

To accomplish this duty the CSUSOP recommends Congress to amend the Ted Stevens Act to:

- “ensure a steady revenue stream for Team USA AC” and “any method of securing independent funding must guarantee a revenue stream” with which an empowered Team USA AC can hire professional staff with a legal duty to act in athletes’ best interests, including legal counsel who can represent athletes in a dispute
- empower the Team USA AC to “raise and direct funds to support athletes’ legal aid”
- “provide an explicit role in representing athletes’ concerns to USOPC, NGBs, U.S. Center for SafeSport, and U.S. Anti-doping Agency on issues relating to arbitration processes, athlete-funding criteria, team-selection criteria, and national-team assignments”
- “clarify and strengthen the authority of the Team USA AC to operate elections for the athlete-representative seats” on USOPC’s Board of Directors and on the boards of the NGBs.

The reality is the current framework for the Olympic and Paralympic Movement in the U.S. is failing our athletes. As stated, in the Final Report “since the enactment of the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act, Congress has tried to implement piecemeal reforms, typically in the aftermath of a crisis.” But the piecemeal reforms coupled with the evolution of the sporting landscape has created a framework that does not work. It is time for the framework itself to be addressed. We are asking Congress to take a proactive stance by putting the right system in place to protect athletes. We ask Congress to help us chart the course forward and make essential statutory reforms to the Ted Stevens Act by making Team USA AC independent. Independence would strengthen athletes’ representation and provide additional safeguarding mechanism for athletes by having an independent organization looking out for their best interests when it comes to athlete safety and wellbeing, commercial rights, team selection procedures, and all issues impacting athletes on and off the field of play.

10. CONCLUSION

In 2023, Team USA AC celebrated its 50th anniversary and made significant progress in serving its athlete constituency. The group has expanded resources for athletes and NGB AACs, and it is now engaging more with a wider range of stakeholders than ever before. The voice of Team USA athletes is stronger than ever, with the Team USA Athletes' Commission advocating on important issues such as the collegiate landscape and athlete rights.

Team USA AC's top priority in 2023 was laying the foundation for modernizing the athlete body by advocating for independence from the USOPC. This independence would be a monumental step for all Team USA athletes and a crucial change to ensure a truly empowered athlete voice within the movement. If Congress does not act to amend the Ted Stevens Act and establish an independent Team USA Athletes' Commission, it will be a disservice to Team USA athletes.



12. APPENDIX

1. Strategic Plan

2. Beijing Figure Skating Statement

3. Transgender Athlete Inclusion Statement

4. Elizabeth Ramsey's Testimony

