

2024

# IMPACT REPORT

Team USA Athletes' Commission



# Executive Summary

In 2024, Team USA Athletes' Commission (Team USA AC) demonstrated bold leadership in championing the athlete's voice and driving positive change within the Olympic and Paralympic Movement. Throughout the year, the Commission focused on strengthening athlete advocacy across key areas, including governance, athlete resources, and engagement at both domestic and international levels.

A central theme of 2024 was the pursuit of enhanced athlete representation and empowerment. Team USA AC actively amplified athlete perspectives on critical issues, advocating for structural improvements and a stronger voice for athletes in decision-making processes. These efforts included continued advocacy for independence and the establishment of a more robust framework to protect athletes' rights and interests.

Direct engagement with athletes remained a top priority, as the Commission worked to foster stronger connections and provide essential support. Furthermore, Team USA AC played a pivotal role in advancing clean sport and athlete safety, partnering with key organizations to advocate for safe, fair, and ethical competition environments. Looking ahead, Team USA AC is well-positioned to build on this momentum. Guided by a newly developed strategic plan, Team US AAC will continue to strengthen athlete advocacy, expand resources, and cultivate meaningful partnerships. Team USA AC remains firmly committed to ensuring the athlete's voice is central to shaping policies and governance within the Olympic and Paralympic ecosystem.



# Impact Report



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# TEAM USA AC BACKGROUND

Team USA AC is the representative group and voice of Team USA athletes. We are responsible for broadening communication between the USOPC and active athletes and serve as a source of input and advice to the USOPC board of directors.

The Ted Steven's Act states that the USOPC shall provide for reasonable representation of amateur athletes including establishing an Athletes' Advisory Council (AAC) composed of and elected by athletes.

Team USA AC is composed of:

- Six members of leadership- one chair, two vice-chairs and three at-large representatives
- Increasing to seven members in 2025
- 65 general representatives – at least one athlete and one alternate from each NGB,
- Six Paralympic general athletes
- Ex-officio members from the IOC Athletes Commission (Allyson Felix) and IPC Athletes' Council.
- Additionally, the Commission is supported by staff members.

## 2021–2024

**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:

- Champion Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Lead with Integrity & Purpose
- Collaborate for Mutual Success
- Advocate for Athletes

In 2024, Team USA AC adopted a new mission, vision and core values for the 2025–2028 quad. Outlined below are the changes:

**Mission:** To serve as the representative voice of all Team USA Athletes.

**Vision:** To protect, empower and advocate for, and on behalf of, Team USA athletes and serve as a catalyst for positive change for the Movement.

**Core Values:** Integrity Community Excellence Teamwork

# STRATEGIC PLANNING & EXECUTION

Throughout 2024, Team USA AC remained steadfast in its commitment to advancing athlete advocacy, executing a wide range of strategic initiatives to support and empower Team USA athletes.

As the Commission concluded the 2021-2024 quadrennial, it marked significant progress in amplifying the athlete voice, strengthening governance structures, and expanding its essential resources for athletes. With a strong foundation in place, Team USA AC is well-positioned to build on its momentum— continuing to drive meaningful change and deliver lasting impact for athletes as it enters the next quadrennial and beyond.

## **Strategic Priorities**

- Organizational Excellence & Sustainability
- Team USA Athlete Success
- Awareness & Brand Promotion
- Stakeholder Relations

## **Organizational Clarity & Excellence**

- Member Engagement & Cultural Transformation: Prepared onboarding and off boarding information for reps as we begin the transition into the next quad. Encouraged networking amongst our internal networks using Slack and email.

## **Team USA Athlete Success**

- Advocate on behalf of athletes to expand Elite Athlete Health Insurance benefits.
- Increase athlete participation in governance and providing education for athletes serving on their NGB board of directors.

## **Awareness & Brand Promotion**

- Expand Social media Presence – Increased following
- Improving Website Content
- Creation of commercial resources and independence page

# STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS

## STAFF ENGAEMENT AT EVENTS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Archery Trials</li><li>• Gymnastics Trials</li><li>• Track and Field Trials</li><li>• Men’s and Women’s Basketball Pre-Games meetings in London</li><li>• Volleyball Selection Camp</li><li>• Fencing Foil Team Camp</li><li>• Rowing Trials</li><li>• Shooting Team Trials</li><li>• Weightlifting Training Camp</li><li>• Wrestling Trials</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gymnastics National Championships</li><li>• Para Archery Trials</li><li>• Para Track and Field Trials</li><li>• Para Swimming Trials and Training Camp</li><li>• Para Rowing Trials</li><li>• Sitting Volleyball Team Camp</li><li>• Wheelchair Basketball Selection Camp</li><li>• Para Shooting Team Trials</li></ul>
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### NGB Partnership

- Regular meetings with the leaders of the National Governing Bodies Council
- Communicated athlete issues as the arise with reps

### USOPC Collaboration

- Regular meetings with athlete services and monthly meetings with USOPC Leadership – CEO and Chief of Sport Performance and Athlete Services



## Anti-Doping Advocates

- **U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA).** Team USA AC has worked closely with USADA to address ongoing challenges in the anti-doping space. In November 2024, USADA's CEO and Director of Athlete Relations presented directly to the Commission during the USOPC General Assembly. This session provided important updates and facilitated meaningful dialogue with athlete representatives to ensure their perspectives and concerns are being heard and addressed.
- **Office of National Control Policy (ONDCP).** Team USA AC continued its collaborative efforts with ONDCP through a mutual exchange of information focused on athlete feedback related to anti-doping concerns and broader issues with the World Anti-Doping Agency's (WADA) governance of anti-doping. To advance these discussions, Commission leadership and staff met with ONDCP representatives in Washington, D.C. reinforcing the commitment to ensuring athlete voices are heard in shaping anti-doping policy.
- **World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).** Team USA AC staff and leadership attended the 2024 WADA Symposium in Lausanne, Switzerland, where they engaged with international stakeholders and reinforced the importance of athlete-centered perspectives into the development of global anti-doping policies

## Incomplete Strategic Priorities

Due to capacity constraints and a focus on high-priority initiatives, some of Team USA AC's planned priorities were not completed in 2024. These items have been thoughtfully deferred and incorporated into the 2025 work plan to ensure they receive the appropriate attention and resources moving forward.

- Team USA Athlete Success
  - Develop Athlete Job Board – *completed April 2025*
  - Peer to Peer Education – *Incorporation into 2025 Athlete Onboarding*
  - Education and Training program for athlete leaders – *Moved to 2025-2028 Quad*
  - Agent Selection Education – *completed April 2025*
  - Establish relationship with a University
- Organizational Excellence & Clarity
  - AAC Resources: Expanding Funding Model – *Moved to 2025-2028 Quad*
- Awareness & Brand Promotion
  - Develop a Social Media Strategy – *Moved to 2025-2028 Quad*



# STRATEGIC PLANNING: SHAPING THE FUTURE (2025–2028)

In 2024, Team USA AC took a major step toward shaping the future by launching the development of its 2025–2028 Strategic Plan through a comprehensive, athlete-centered approach. Guided by strategic consultants, from Paradigm Four, the planning process was designed to incorporate broad stakeholder input and ensure the athlete voice remained central throughout. Key Milestones in the Strategic Planning Process:

- **January 2024.** Focus Groups conducted by Paradigm Four at Team USA AC’s Athlete Forum to gather initial athlete representative feedback.
- **February 2024.** Survey distributed to NGB, IMS, AAC, and AAG athletes to capture diverse perspectives across the athlete community. •Individual interviews conducted by consultants with key stakeholders: Sarah Hirshland, USOPC CEO, Rocky Harris, (USOPC Chief of Sport and Athlete services), Pat Kelleher (USA Hockey CEO and Chair of NGBC), Li Li Leung, USA Gymnastics CEO and Vice Chair NGBC) and Team USA AC staff
- **April 2024.** Draft Strategic Plan presented to the full Team USA AC body for review and discussion.
- **August 2024.** Team USA AC formally approved the 2025–2028 Strategic Plan, establishing a clear roadmap to guide advocacy, engagement, and governance efforts in the next quadrennial.

With this strategic roadmap in place, Team USA AC is poised to strengthen athlete advocacy, enhance resources, and drive meaningful change in the coming years. As noted in the Background section of this report, Team USA AC also updated its mission, vision, and core values to better reflect its evolving role and priorities. The plan outlines key objectives that will guide decision-making and organizational growth over the next quadrennial, including:

- 1.**Transforming into an independent organization** – Establishing greater autonomy to enhance effectiveness and advocacy efforts.
- 2.**Organizational clarity and leadership** – Strengthening internal structures and leadership development.
- 3.**Athlete advocacy** – Expanding efforts to protect and promote athlete rights and interests.
- 4.**Strengthening partnerships with stakeholders** – Fostering collaboration with key partners to enhance athlete support.
- 5.**Sharing the Team USA AC story and enhancing the brand** – Increasing visibility and engagement to strengthen the Commission’s impact.

Team USA AC remains committed to leading with purpose, transparency, and a deep-rooted belief in the power of the athlete voice.



# ATHLETE ENGAGEMENT

In 2024, Team USA AC staff actively engaged with athletes across a wide range of sports, fostering strong connections and direct support. These efforts were designed not only to assist and provide support during key events, but also strengthen relationships, raise awareness of the Commission's mission, and reinforce its unwavering commitment to advocacy. By maintaining a consistent presence at key events and training environments, the AC builds relationships and trust, empowering athletes to understand their rights, navigate challenges, and stay focused on performance.

**Trials and Events.** A major focus of these in-person engagements was to support Paris 2024 selection events. It was essential for athletes to have on-the-ground advocate support in case any issues arose—such as team selection disputes, discretionary appeals, or anti-doping matters. These engagements also allowed Team USA AC staff to educate athletes on our role at the Games and begin fostering relationships ahead of Paris.

**Training Center Meetings.** Another pillar of athlete engagement is connecting with athletes during team camps and visits to the training center in Colorado Springs. Having an office at the training center provides staff with valuable access to athletes and the opportunity to engage with them in a less stressful, out-of-competition environment.

- USA Karate
- USA Cycling
- USA Rowing
- Para Track & Field
- Para Nordic
- Para Swimming
- Swimming
- Sitting Volleyball
- USA Basketball
- Wheelchair Basketball

Access to athletes by Team USA AC staff is not currently governed by formal policy. Instead, it often depends on the goodwill and shared vision of NGBs and individuals who recognize the value of athlete representation. We're sincerely grateful to those partners who have welcomed us and facilitated access to competitions, training camps, and trials. Your support strengthens the athlete's voice and creates vital opportunities to connect, educate, and advocate on behalf of athletes.

Looking ahead, our goal is to establish a shared, consistent access policy in partnership with the USOPC and all NGBs. Creating equitable access across all sports will ensure every athlete has the opportunity to benefit from the AC's resources and support. Just as importantly, it will help reinforce the values of transparency, trust, and athlete empowerment across the entire Team USA ecosystem.

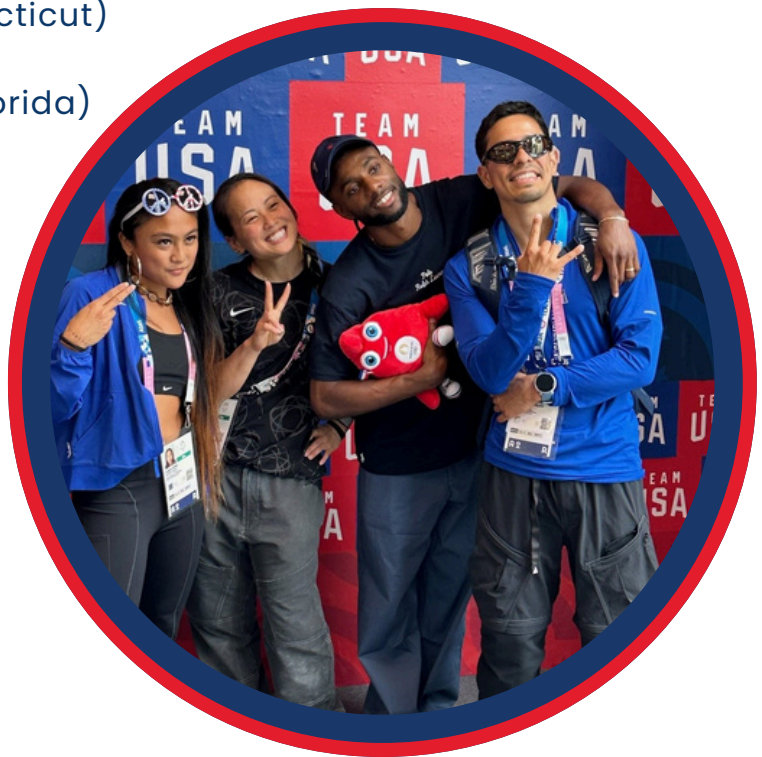
# ADVOCACY

On March 1, 2024, the Commission on the State of the U.S. Olympics and Paralympics (CSUSOP) published its Final Report, outlining twelve key recommendations. Notably, Recommendation #6 called for the independence of Team USA AC from the USOPC — a pivotal step toward strengthening athlete representation and ensuring a truly empowered athlete voice. This milestone underscores the growing recognition of athlete advocacy and the need for independent governance structures that prioritize athlete interests.

Throughout 2024, Team USA AC took significant steps toward achieving true independence, actively advocating for structural changes to strengthen athlete representation through the establishment of an independent Team USA AC. These efforts aimed to ensure that athletes have a secure and autonomous voice in shaping the future of the Olympic and Paralympic Movement. Key actions included:

**Congressional Advocacy.** Team USA AC engaged with key Congressional staffers to advocate for meaningful reforms within the broader sport ecosystem. Central to these efforts is a push for an amendment to the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act (TSA) that would codify the independence, duties and powers of an independent Team USA AC. This amendment aims to ensure that athlete rights are clearly defined and protected through law, reinforcing the AC's ability to advocate effectively on behalf of athletes across all sports. Meetings were held with the offices of:

- Senator Jerry Moran (Kansas)
- Senator John Hickenlooper (Colorado)
- Senator Marsha Blackburn (Tennessee)
- Senator Alex Padilla (California)
- Senator Richard Blumenthal (Connecticut)
- Congressman Ted Lieu (California)
- Congressman Vernon Buchanan (Florida)



These meetings were highly productive, with staffers expressing strong support for athlete empowerment and a shared interest in ensuring accountability and transparency in the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic system. Several lawmakers voiced openness to legislative solutions that would strengthen athlete representation and protections.

While these early conversations were encouraging, continued work is needed to build bipartisan consensus and refine the proposed legislative language. Team USA AC remains committed to ongoing collaboration with Congressional leaders, the USOPC, and other stakeholders to drive forward meaningful, athlete-centered reform.

As we continue to champion the creation of a fully independent entity dedicated to protecting athlete rights. The U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) serves as a strong and credible model of what independent oversight can achieve. Currently, no other independent body within the Olympic and Paralympic Movement demonstrates that same level of effectiveness and trust. This gap must be addressed to ensure that athlete protections are real, enforceable, and impartial.

## ADVOCACY INITIATIVES

To further the mission of athlete empowerment and institutional reform, Team USA AC has undertaken several key initiatives in support of establishing a fully independent and effective athlete commission:

- **Mobilizing Athlete Support.** Team USA has been collecting athlete signatures for a letter to be sent to Congress, demonstrating broad-based support for the creation of an independent Team USA AC. In addition, we provided athletes with customizable template letters, enabling them to easily contact their Congressional representatives and personally voice their support for An independent AC with codified duties and powers.
- **Congressional Testimony.** Team USA AC representatives attended Congressional hearings focused on athlete safety, reinforcing the critical need for stronger athlete protections and the establishment of an independent body to advocate on behalf of athletes within the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement.
- **Policy Development.** We have begun working with experts in initiating the drafting process of proposed amendments to the TSA. These proposed amendments aim to clearly define the independent role, authority, and responsibilities of Team USA AC in federal legislation, ensuring lasting protections for athlete rights.
- **Education & Awareness.** In July 2024, Team USA AC hosted a virtual information session for Congressional staffers. This session focused on the importance of athlete advocacy, the current gaps in oversight and protection, and the urgent need for a truly independent and empowered athlete commission within the Olympic and Paralympic system.



# ANTI-DOPING

Team USA AC plays a crucial role in anti-doping advocacy, ensuring that athletes' voices are represented in the development, enforcement, and oversight of clean sport policies. As trusted athlete representatives, the AC works to promote fair play while safeguarding athletes' rights during the testing and adjudication process. The AC advocates for increased transparency, accountability, and athlete education in anti-doping efforts, while also pushing for reforms that reduce administrative burdens and protect athletes from procedural injustices. By serving as a liaison between athletes and key stakeholders—such as ONDCP, USADA, and WADA—the AC works to ensure that anti-doping systems remain athlete-centered, credible, and effective.

## Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP)

Team USA AC took a proactive stance on global anti-doping issues, collaborating closely with the White House ONDCP in response to the Chinese swimmers scandal. Recognizing the vital importance of athlete input in preserving the integrity of clean sport, the Commission worked to elevate athlete voices, gather meaningful feedback, and advocate for stronger, more transparent global anti-doping measures. This partnership focused on ensuring that the athlete perspective was not only heard but prioritized in shaping U.S. policy and engagement within the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) framework. Key initiatives included:

- **Athlete Townhall.** Team USA AC hosted a joint town hall with the ONDCP to provide athletes a platform to express concerns, shared experiences, and discuss the broader impact of doping violations on fair competition and athlete trust in the system.
- **Strategic Dialogue.** Participated in high-level meetings with ONDCP to ensure that athletes remained at the center of U.S. anti-doping policy and advocacy efforts, particularly international forums and governing bodies.



## **U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA)**

Team USA AC maintained its strong commitment to clean sport in 2024 through regular and proactive engagement with USADA. This engagement included ongoing meetings with USADA's CEO and Director of Athlete Relations, as well as a formal presentation to the full athlete body at the 2024 USOPC Assembly. Beyond these regular engagements, Team USA AC collaborates closely with USADA to provide informed feedback on the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Code and other international anti-doping policies. This partnership ensures that athlete perspectives are integrated into the development and refinement of global standards and practices. These ongoing interactions provided:

- **Key Insights and Updates.** Timely information on anti-doping developments, policy changes, and emerging issues, helping Team USA athletes stay well-informed and prepared.
- **Athlete Advocacy Opportunities.** Direct channels for athletes to raise concerns and advocate for improvements in testing protocols, transparency, and enforcement practices.
- **Strengthened Collaboration.** A continued and reinforced partnership between Team USA AC and USADA, underscoring the shared dedication to protecting clean athletes and upholding the integrity of competition.

## **World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)**

In 2024, Team USA AC played pivotal role in global anti-doping advocacy by actively participating in global anti-doping discussions to ensure Team USA athlete voices were heard and incorporated into policy development. Key highlights of the Commission's engagement included providing formal feedback on the WADA Code and attending the WADA Symposium in Lausanne, Switzerland —a critical gathering of global stakeholders in clean sport. Through these efforts, Team USA AC was able to:

- **Advocate for Athlete Interests.** Contribute to the ongoing development and enforcement of anti-doping policies with a focus on fairness, protection of athlete rights, and equitable sanctioning.
- **Engage with International Stakeholders.** Build strategic relationships and participate in high-level discussions with global anti-doping organizations and stakeholders to effectively represent the perspective and concerns of Team US Athletes.
- **Stay Informed and Responsive.** Monitor global anti-doping developments and emerging issues, enabling proactive and informed in the collective fight to uphold clean sport.

***See Appendix for statements regarding WADA Report, Chinese Swimming cases , and Kamila Valieva Cas Decision***

## **Congressional Advocacy – Strengthening Global Anti-Doping Oversight**

On July 30, 2024, members of Congress held a virtual press conference to announce bipartisan legislation aimed at increasing accountability and transparency within WADA. This legislative initiative was driven by global concerns raised following revelations surrounding the Chinese doping scandal. The announcement underscored the urgent need for stronger oversight and reform within in global anti-doping governance structures. Team USA AC supports these efforts as part of its broader commitment to ensuring athlete voices are represented in shaping fair, transparent, and effective anti-doping systems worldwide.

Team USA AC was prominently represented during the announcement. Greta Neimanas, Team USA AC Leadership At-Large Member, and former WADA Athletes' Committee member, delivered a powerful and candid statement reflecting the concerns of athletes worldwide:

*"Athletes have never been fully represented nor empowered at WADA. Since my term on the WADA AC, athlete representation has been increasingly marginalized and mis represented... The athletes are the reason we have the Paralympic and Olympic Games yet their best interests are not represented in the biggest rooms..."*

Neimanas' remarks captured the deep frustration shared by many across the global athlete community and served as a clear call to action for meaningful reform that centers the athlete voice. Team USA AC remains steadfast in its advocacy for athlete-driven solutions and continues to support legislative and structural reforms that bring transparency, independence, and fairness to international anti-doping governance.





# ATHLETE SAFETY & WELL-BEING

## U.S. Center for SafeSport (the Center)

In 2024, Team USA AC reinforced its unwavering commitment to athlete safety and well-being by actively engaging directly with SafeSport and amplifying athlete voices in critical discussions around protection, accountability, and systematic reform. These efforts underscored the AC's role as both a convener and advocate for real, athlete-centered change. As part of these efforts:

- **SafeSport Leadership Engagement.** As part of its ongoing work, Team USA AC welcomed then Center CEO Ju'Riese Colon to the 2024 Athlete Forum in Orlando, FL. This session offered athlete representatives a critical opportunity to directly engage with SafeSport leadership— asking questions, raising concerns, and highlighting areas for improvements in how athlete safety issues are handled and communicated.
- **Standing Against Abuse.** In response to reports of harassment and assault within U.S. Biathlon, Team USA issued a public statement condemning the abuse of athletes and calling for full accountability and meaningful reform. . The Commission continues to stand in solidarity with affected athletes and remains committed to creating a sport environment where safety, respect, and dignity are non-negotiable.

***See Appendix for full statement regarding U.S. Biathlon***



## **Congressional Advocacy**

Much of the systemic change needed to improve athlete safety and reform the governance of the Center will require Congressional intervention. Legislative action is essential to ensure transparency, true independence, and accountability—principles that are currently lacking and that cannot be fully addressed through internal reforms alone.

- **Legislative Feedback & Advocacy.** Team USA AC provided athlete-informed feedback on proposed federal legislation aimed at strengthening the accountability of SafeSport and improving the support systems available to athletes navigating the reporting and investigation process. This included engagement on the Safer Sports for Athletes Act of 2024, which proposes key amendments to Section 220530(a)(3) of Title 36 of the United States Code. These changes seek to enhance oversight of NGBs and reinforce obligations related to athlete safety. Team USA AC continues to advocate for legislative reforms that center athlete protection, ensure due process, and create more transparent, trauma-informed systems of accountability.
- **Additional Congressional Advocacy.** SafeSport Oversight and Reform. In meetings with members of Congress and their staff, Team USA AC's advocacy for an independent and empowered Athlete Commission often intersects with broader concerns about the U.S. Center for SafeSport. During these conversations, the Commission consistently raises critical issues surrounding the Center's operational and funding model. Specifically, we urge Congress to examine:
  - **The Center's Funding Structure.** We highlight concerns over the (USOPC charging NGBs higher fees for increased use of the Center's services—an arrangement that may disincentivize proper reporting and case referrals.
  - **The Center's Model of Independence.** We encourage Congress to reevaluate the current structure of the Center's so-called "independent" model, and instead consider USADA as a more effective and credible example of operational independence.
  - **Protections During Jurisdiction Deferrals.** Team USA AC also advocates for greater oversight and athlete protections when the Center defers jurisdiction back to an NGB for investigation. This practice is fraught with conflicts of interest and often results in processes that are neither fair nor trauma-informed, ultimately undermining athlete trust and safety.

These points are part of our broader commitment to a system that prioritizes athlete well-being, transparency, and accountability at all levels of sport governance.

# GOVERNANCE

Team USA AC plays a critical role in ensuring that athlete voices are represented at every level of sport governance within the Olympic and Paralympic Movement. As the elected body of athlete representatives, the AC advocates for policies that prioritize athlete rights, well-being, and fair treatment. This includes participation in governance decisions across the USOPC, NGBs, and other institutional partners.

The AC provides informed feedback on policies related to team selection, anti-doping, athlete safety, dispute resolution, and international representation. By serving as a liaison between athletes and decision-makers, the AC helps shape a more transparent, equitable, and athlete-centered sport system. Its presence ensures that those most impacted by sport policies—athletes—have a meaningful voice in how the system is built and held accountable.

## TEAM USA AC LEADERSHIP ELECTIONS

In the fall, Team USA AC welcomed new members of leadership for the 2025–2028 quadrennial. During the 2024 USOPC Assembly in Colorado Springs, Colorado, leadership candidates from a pool of 12 Class A candidates and 6 Class B candidates delivered speeches to the full Team USA AC body. Following these presentations, the Commission held a vote to elect five new members. A notable enhancement for this quadrennial was the introduction of a seventh leadership position, along with revised eligibility criteria aimed at broadening the candidate pool and promote more inclusive and diverse representation within the Commission.

### 2025–2028 Elected Team USA AC Leadership:

- Joel Rosinbum – Triathlon (*Filled a 2 year vacancy on Leadership*)
- Greta Neimanas – Paralympic Cycling
- Chuck Aoki– Wheelchair Rugby
- Liezel Huber – Tennis
- Zahir Carrington – Basketball (Class B)

### Ongoing Leadership Members:

Morgan Fuller Kolsrud (Artistic Swimming) and Alison Tetrack (Cycling) continue in their leadership roles, with their current terms concluding in 2026.





# TEAM USA AC REPRESENTATIVE ELECTIONS

As part of the transition to the 2025–2028 quadrennial, Team USA AC facilitated the selection of new representatives and alternates through elections conducted by each National Governing Body (NGB) and Internally Managed Sport (IMS) organization. To ensure a transparent and efficient election process, Team USA AC developed a comprehensive Election Toolkit, which included:

- Eligibility requirements for candidates and voters
- Election timeline and process overview
- Preparation guidelines and best practices
- Communication templates to support outreach
- Additional resources to assist NGBs and IMS organizations in managing elections effectively

To further assist stakeholders, Team USA AC hosted an Election Toolkit Webinar in June 2024, guiding NGB and IMS staff through the toolkit, key Team USA AC Bylaws, and the Members Elections and Voting Policy. The webinar also provided a forum for Q&A, ensuring clarity on the election process and addressing any questions from stakeholders. By streamlining election procedures and fostering greater participation and transparency, Team USA AC demonstrated its ongoing commitment to strong athlete representation and effective governance.

Despite these efforts, persistent challenges remain—primarily due to misalignment between Team USA AC Bylaws, USOPC policies, and individual NGB election procedures. These inconsistencies often result in confusion, non-compliance, and a lack of uniform standards that can undermine the credibility and integrity of athlete representative elections.

Common problems include NGB bylaws that directly contradict Team USA AC election policies. For example, some NGBs include language such as, “If no votes are cast, the President shall appoint the USOPC AAC Representative,” or mandate that the representative and alternate be of opposite genders—both of which undermine democratic processes and athlete autonomy. Additional concerns include the use of uncontested election procedures without transparency, late or ignored election timelines, and limited understanding of the USOPC’s 10-Year Athlete eligibility standard.

Furthermore, NGBs that govern multiple sports under different International Federations have, in some cases, failed to appoint a representative for each federation, as required by Team USA AC Bylaws.

Another recurring issue is the co-mingling or “waterfalling” of elections, where outcomes of one election influence another, further complicating compliance and transparency. These inconsistencies have revealed broader structural issues, particularly with USOPC Bylaws. For instance, Section 8.5.3 allows an alternate AAC representative to become a voting board member if the NGB so chooses, potentially distorting the intended athlete representation quota. Similarly, Section 14.8 suggests NGBs should “confer” with the AAC on election procedures, but this language lacks enforceability and leaves too much discretion in the hands of each NGB.

To address these systemic gaps, Team USA AC has strongly advocated for the authority to oversee all athlete representative elections across the Olympic and Paralympic Movement. Centralized oversight by the AC would ensure consistency, protect athlete voice, and eliminate procedural ambiguities that currently undermine the integrity of elections. Without such reform, athletes risk being sidelined by fragmented governance processes that fall short of the standards the athlete community deserves.

## USOPC BYLAWS

In 2024, following advocacy from Team USA AC, the USOPC Board of Directors adopted bylaw changes to improve how At-Large Athlete Representatives are selected and defined aligning with the intent of the Ted Stevens Act and the USOPC’s core values of athlete rights and governance excellence.

Key updates include:

- **Team USA AC Selection Authority.** All At-Large Athlete Representatives to the USOPC Board must be nominated through U.S. Olympians & Paralympians Alumni Association (USOPA) and Team USA AC’s Joint Nominating Committee, but are directly elected by Team USA AC representatives. This marks a monumental shift in the selection process: for the first time, the power to elect athlete board members rests solely with current athlete representatives. This change significantly reduces the influence of USOPA in governance, ensuring that active athletes—those most affected by governance decisions—have full control over who represents them at the highest level of the USOPC.

These changes ensure that athlete Board representation is athlete-driven, consistent with national standards for athlete voice, and more reflective of the diverse experiences of Team USA athletes.

# TEAM USA AC BYLAW AMENDMENTS

In 2024, Team USA AC made key updates to its Bylaws to enhance governance, improve clarity, and reinforce its commitment to strengthening athlete representation. This effort was conducted through a collaborative process with USOPC staff, ensuring alignment with USOPC Bylaws and organizational best practices. During the official comment period, key USOPC departments—including general counsel, ethics and compliance, and governance—were engaged to provide input, helping shape thoughtful and effective revisions. Key amendments include:

- **Official Recognition.** The organization’s operating name was formally recognized as “Team USA Athletes’ Commission”, reinforcing its identity within the Olympic and Paralympic Movement.
- **Terminology Corrections.** Clarified references to the AAC Nominations and Governance Committee, correcting prior mislabeling as the Nominations and Elections Committee.
- **Bylaw and Eligibility Alignment.** Enhanced clarity and consistency with USOPC Bylaws, piratically around structural and eligibility references.
- **Leadership Expansion:** Added a seventh member to Team USA AC Leadership to broaden athlete representation and perspectives taking into account the the Team USA Racial and Social Justice Council Recommendations.
- **Transparency Measures.** Strengthened Conflicts of Interest disclosures requirements to increase transparency and accountability among representatives.
- **Codified Responsibilities.** Clearly defined the duties and responsibilities of Team USA AC representatives to improve role clarity and support stronger internal accountability.
- **Structured Agenda Process.** Formalized a clear process for adding agenda items to meetings to ensure inclusive, organized, and representative discussions.

These bylaw updates reflect Team USA AC’s strategic focus on good governance, transparency, and effective athlete advocacy, ensuring the organization is well-positioned to support and represent Team US Athletes across the Movement. reinforcing its role as a trusted and effective voice for Team USA athletes.





# USOPC IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE WORKING GROUP

Team USA AC actively participated in the USOPC Implementation Guide Working Group, bringing forward concerns about the current state of NGB Athletes' Advisory Councils (AACs). Currently, the only requirement for an NGB AAC is that each 'NGB must have an Athletes' Advisory Council that meets the USOPC minimum standards.

While member eligibility criteria are defined, there are no defined duties or responsibilities assigned to these councils beyond appointing athletes to various levels of representation within the NGB. In practice, many NGB AACs have become little more than a compliance checkbox. While they technically fulfil the requirement, they often lack meaningfully empowerment to influence decision-making or advocate for athletes in substantive ways.

To address this, Team USA AC submitted feedback recommending that NGBs be required to consult their AACs on critical athlete-facing issues, including:

- Elite Athlete Health Insurance (EAHI) allocation
- High-Performance Plans
- Athlete stipend distribution
- Other key policy decisions impacting elite athletes.

The response we received stated that no changes would be made to require such consultation, explaining that: "there would be no change to require NGBs to consult their AACs on these matters. To the extent that these decisions are owned by the NGB board, athletes are represented through their athlete board member representatives—at least one of whom is required to be on the NGB AAC and should be filtering information between the AAC and the board. To the extent that these decisions are staff-driven, the board maintains oversight responsibility"

While we appreciate the response, this explanation does not address the fundamental concern, many NGB AACs remain structurally disempowered and are unable to meaningfully advocate on behalf of athletes. Team USA AC continues to strongly recommend the establishment of minimum standards that require consultation with NGB AACs on key matters, ensuring these councils are not symbolic but rather serve as effective, empowered advocates for Team USA athletes.

# ATHLETE APPOINTMENTS

One of Team USA AC's core responsibilities is appointing athlete representatives to various USOPC working groups, task forces, and committees. Team USA AC takes this responsibility very seriously, recognizing the importance of ensuring that athlete voices are meaningfully represented in all areas of decision-making across the Olympic and Paralympic Movement.

- **U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Endowment.** Marti Malloy (Judo)
- **Paralympic Advisory Council.**
  - Clark Rachfal (Para Cycling)
  - Simon Detmer (Para Track & Field)
  - Hailey Danz (Para Triathlon)
  - Lauryn DeLuca (Wheelchair Fencing)
- **U.S. Center for SafeSport Athlete Director Recommendation.** Steve Mesler (Bobsled) and Lee Ford-Faherty (Para Archery). In 2025 Lee Ford-Faherty formally joined the Center's Board.
- **IPC Candidate.** Simon Detmer (Para Track & Field) (did not qualify for Paris making him ineligible to run in Paris)
- **USOPC Athlete Board Reappointment.** Daria Schneider (Fencing)



# PARIS 2024 OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC GAMES

At the Games, Team USA AC provides direct, on-the-ground support to athletes, ensuring they have a trusted representative available if any issues arise. AC staff are also present to help facilitate the flag bearer election, support the U.S. nominee in international athlete elections, and staff the Athlete Resource Center. Beyond operational roles, Team USA AC prioritizes building meaningful relationships with athletes, laying the foundation to better support them not just during the Games, but throughout their careers and in non-Games environments.

## IOC ELECTION

Team USA AC is responsible for running the process for selecting the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Athletes' Commission Candidate. Following an extensive interview process conducted by the Team USA AC Nominations and Elections Committee and after a vote by the AC body, five-time Olympian Allyson Felix was selected as the U.S. candidate.

During the Paris Olympic Games, Felix was elected by her fellow athletes, securing her position as a global representative for athlete advocacy. In her new role, she will amplify the athletes' voices on the international stage throughout her eight-year term. Additionally, Felix, has joined the USOPC Board of Directors and continues to serve as a member of Team USA AC.



# FLAG BEARER ELECTIONS

Carrying the nation's flag during the Opening or Closing Ceremony of the Olympic Games is one of the highest honors an athlete can receive. What makes Team USA unique is that this selection process is athlete-driven, ensuring that those chosen to embody the spirit and values of Team USA. Team USA Athletes' Commission proudly hosted these elections, continuing a tradition of athlete-led governance that dates back to the establishment of the AC in the wake of the 1972 Olympic Games.

## Elected Opening Ceremony Flag Bearers:

- Olympic Games: LeBron James (Basketball) and Coco Gauff (Tennis)
- Paralympic Games: Steve Serio (Wheelchair Basketball) and Nicky Nieves (Sitting Volleyball)

## Elected Closing Ceremony Flag Bearers:

- Olympic Games: Katie Ledecky (Swimming) and Nicholas Mead (Rowing)
- Paralympic Games: Paul Shulte (Wheelchair Basketball) and Elizabeth Marks (Para Swimming)

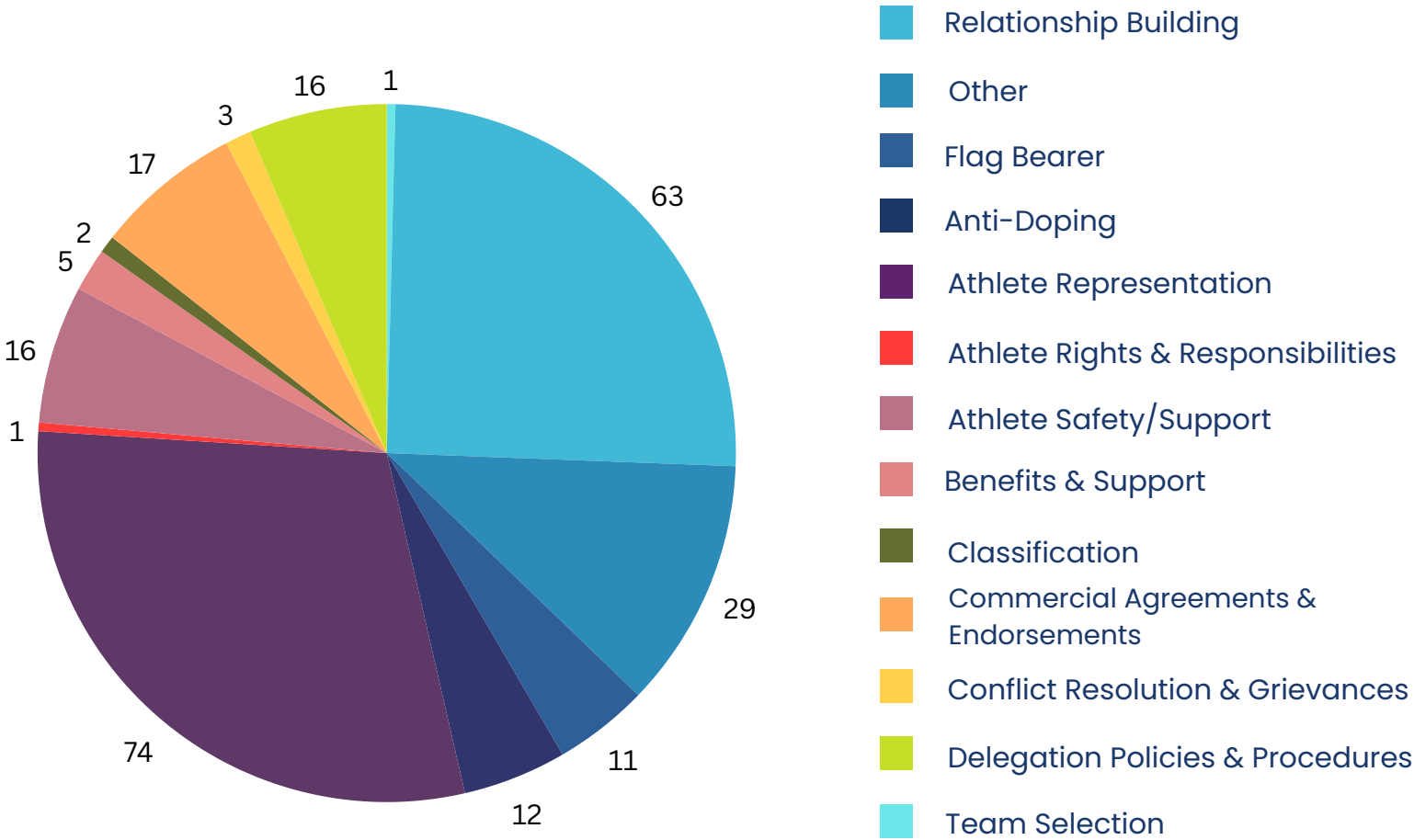




# ATHLETE SUPPORT

For the first time, Team USA AC tracked the support provided to athletes and stakeholders using an intake form designed to collect data efficiently. The form allowed us to capture detailed information and store it in Salesforce, providing immediate access to insights.

By implementing this approach, we gained a deeper understanding of the types of support offered and how resources were allocated. The pie chart below illustrates the distribution of support, breaking it down by the specific groups or individuals who received assistance. This data not only helps us evaluate the effectiveness of our support strategies but also enables us to refine and tailor our efforts to better meet the needs of athletes and stakeholders moving forward.



## TEAM USA AC AT THE GAMES

Team USA AC Staff operated from the Athlete Resource Center (ARC) within the Village. This location created an opportunity to build relationships with athletes and raise awareness of Team USA AC's work. The ARC served as a central social and informational hub for Village residents. Key Team USA AC services included on-the-ground support and information in the following areas:

- Delegation policies and procedures
- Athlete Rights & Responsibilities
- Athlete Agreements & Endorsements
- Anti-doping resources
- Conflict Resolution & Grievances assistance
- General Athlete Support

## ATHLETE RESOURCES

Team USA athletes have diverse needs across various areas, including governance and the commercial marketplace. Many of these needs are education-based, and Team USA AC is committed to offering robust support and resources to meet these demands. In alignment with the Team USA AC 2025-2028 Strategic Plan, we provide athletes with the following:



**NGB AAC/IMS AAC Support.** Team USA AC continued its concerted effort to provide vertical support to each sport's athlete body (AACs/AAGs) by offering targeted services and resources aimed at strengthening their capacity and effectiveness. These efforts included:

- **Media Consultation.** In 2024, Team USA AC provided individualized media consultation to athlete leaders and AAC/AAG representatives preparing for high-profile interviews, public statements, and crisis communications. This support included:
  - Messaging guidance and talking point development
  - Preparation for media interviews and panel appearances
  - Support in drafting official statements or op-eds
  - Strategy alignment with broader Team USA AC communications objectives
- **Training.** Team USA AC offers a comprehensive training program designed to educate athlete representatives at the NGB and IMS levels. In 2024, Team USA AC conducted [X number] of virtual training sessions, ensuring wide accessibility for athlete representatives. The training program covers essential topics, including:
  - **Athlete Representation 101.** Providing foundational knowledge on athlete advocacy and the importance of effective representation
  - **Team USA AC.** Detailing the role and impact of Team USA AC in the Movements
  - **Governance.** Educating athlete representatives on governance structures and how to navigate the decision-making processes within NGBs and IMS organizations
  - **Athlete Voice Amplification.** Teaching techniques to enhance athlete influence and ensure their voices are heard at all levels
  - **Best Practices.** Sharing proven strategies for effective leadership, communication, and collaboration within athlete bodies

These virtual sessions ensure that athlete representatives are well-prepared to engage, advocate, and lead within their respective NGBs and IMS organizations.

**NGB AAC Resources.** A suite of resources aimed at enhancing the governance and effectiveness of NGB Internal Athlete Advisory Councils.



**Commercial Resources.** Team USA AC is committed to empowering athletes by improving financial security and commercial opportunities. As part of Team USA AC's 2025-2028 Strategic Priority for Athlete Advocacy, we have developed resources to help athletes navigate the ever-changing commercial landscape. This page serves as a hub for tools and education designed to help athletes maximize their earning potential, understand their market value, and make informed financial decisions for long-term stability in and beyond sport.

- **Endorsement Checklist and Webinar.** Geared towards athletes without formal representation, the checklist and webinar highlights critical provisions in endorsement contracts to ensure athletes fully understanding of their rights and obligations.
- **One-On-One consulting.** Team USA AC provides one-on-one consulting services to athletes, connecting them directly, free of charge, with an attorney specializing in deal creation and endorsements. This service allows athletes to:
  - Receive personalized advice on endorsement contracts
  - Understand key provisions, rights, and obligations in deals
  - Ensure that the terms of endorsement agreements are in their best interests

**Media Training.** To further prepare athletes for a high-visibility environment, Team USA AC hosted a dedicated media training session ahead of the Paris Games. This training equipped athletes with tools to:

- Navigate the intense media landscape at the Games
- Handle interviews with confidence and consistency
- Represent Team USA with clarity and professionalism under pressure

These efforts helped ensure that athletes felt empowered, informed, and supported in sharing their stories and advocating for themselves and their communities on the global stage.





# BARRIERS TO ATHLETE REPRESENTATION

## LACK OF AWARENESS

A persistent barrier to strong athlete representation within the Olympic and Paralympic Movement is the lack of awareness among athletes about the existence and role of Team USA AC. This is clearly illustrated year over year in the annual athlete survey conducted by the USOPC. Many athletes are unaware that Team USA AC serves as their primary voice in governance, advocacy, and accountability efforts at both national and international levels.

This gap in awareness weakens the AC's ability to engage athletes meaningfully, represent their interests effectively, and build trust across sports. As a result, critical input from athletes is often missing in key decisions that directly impact their careers and well-being.

The lack of athlete awareness about the AC is further compounded by systemic barriers within the USOPC and NGBs. One significant challenge is the absence of accurate and comprehensive data on athletes who meet the USOPC's "10-year athlete" eligibility criteria, which hinders effective outreach and engagement efforts by the AC.

Without reliable data, it becomes difficult for Team USA AC representatives to identify and connect with the athletes they serve, limiting opportunities for meaningful communication and education. Additionally, both the USOPC and many NGBs face challenges—or exhibit reluctance—in sharing athlete contact information with their elected athlete representatives. This lack of information flow creates a communication gap, making it nearly impossible for AC members to build relationships, provide timely updates, or inform athletes about their rights and available support resources.



In an effort to address these awareness and accessibility issues, Team USA AC requested greater presence and engagement opportunities during key USOPC events such as DC Week, which is a crucial time for advocacy and athlete engagement. However, these requests were met with resistance, limiting the Commission’s ability to raise its profile and directly connect with athletes during these influential gatherings outside of just the high stress environment of competition.

Together, these factors create a cycle that undermines the AC’s visibility and effectiveness as the athlete voice within the Movement. Overcoming these barriers requires institutional commitment from the USOPC and NGBs to improve data sharing, facilitate direct communication channels, and support increased athlete representation at key events—steps that are essential to strengthening athlete trust, empowerment, and participation.

## **LACK OF CODIFIED POWERS OF TEAM USA AC**

Given the monopolistic structure of the Movement—where all athletes must engage with the USOPC and their respective NGBs—Team USA AC emphasizes the need for stronger, codified powers to protect athlete interests.

Currently, there is no formal negotiation process between athletes and the USOPC or their NGBs regarding major policies, procedures, or documents that directly impact athletes. These decisions are often unilaterally drafted by one party and approved by a committee—or in some cases, outside of a committee—where athletes comprise only 33% of the voice.

Presently, Team USA AC lacks authority to audit, enforce compliance, access athletes, or engage meaningfully on behalf of athletes in decision-making and grievance processes directly impacting athletes.



To ensure policies are truly representative of athletes' interests, a more collaborative process is necessary. Athletes should have a stronger role in shaping the decisions that directly affect them. Furthermore, athletes currently do not a direct role in determining which programs and services are offered to them. There needs to be a jointly agreement between the athletes and the organizations on the benefits they receive, ensuring those benefits truly serve their needs.

Beyond the need for codified governance protections there are other barriers to athlete representation:

- **Access to athletes.** There is no formal, codified process that ensures Team USA AC has consistent and direct access to the athletes it represents. Currently, we rely on the goodwill of NGBs and USOPC to engage with athletes.
- **Notice.** Another significant barrier is the lack of communication and notice given to Team USA AC regarding athlete-related issues. With the exceptions , such as Section 9 disputes or Games Rules Panel situations, Team USA AC is not a required recipient of notice.

To address these challenges, we propose that Team USA AC's duties and powers be clearly codified within the USOPC Bylaws and TSA. This would create a formal, structured framework for athlete representation. Subsequently, the USOPC and Team USA AC could jointly develop a policy outlining the specific processes and procedures for implementing this framework.

- **NGB AAC Governance.** While requiring NGBs to form Athletes' Advisory Councils (AACs) was an important governance milestone, many AACs remain underpowered. To ensure these bodies serve as true representatives of athletes, Team USA AC urges the USOPC to formally empower NGB AACs with clearly defined roles, governance authority, and input over key decisions affecting athletes—such as high-performance planning and funding allocation. ,



# 2025 OUTLOOK

- **Implementation of the new strategic plan.** In 2025, Team USA AC will focus on the successful implementation of its newly developed strategic plan, ensuring that athlete representation, empowerment, and advocacy remain at the forefront of our efforts.
- **Achieving Codified Powers and Duties of Team USA AC Independence.** A key priority will be the advocacy effort for Team USA AC Independence. This includes working jointly with USOPC and Congress to codify the duties and powers of Team USA AC, reinforcing our commitment to robust athlete representation and governance.
- **Improvements to Sports Governance.** We will focus on advancing sports governance by improving athlete elections and enhancing athlete representation both within the USOPC and across NGBs. This includes pushing for more meaningful participation in decision-making processes and ensuring athletes have the ability to influence policies that directly affect them.
- **Onboarding of new representatives.** The onboarding of new Team USA AC representatives will be a priority in 2025, ensuring that athletes continue to have strong, diverse voices in leadership positions. This process will be designed to foster inclusion and provide the necessary training and support for incoming representatives.
- **Spreading Awareness of the Team USA AC Brand.** We will continue efforts to increase awareness of the Team USA AC brand, making sure athletes, stakeholders, and the broader public understand the role of Team USA AC and the services it provides.





# Conclusion

In 2024, Team USA AC made significant strides in athlete advocacy, governance, and education. The Commission strengthened its role in international anti-doping efforts, collaborating closely with USADA and participating in key global forums like the WADA Symposium. It actively engaged with policymakers, contributing to legislative advocacy for stronger athlete protections and greater transparency in sport governance.

Team USA AC enhanced athlete safety initiatives through ongoing collaboration with SafeSport, providing athlete-informed feedback on federal legislation and facilitating open dialogue between athletes and leadership. The Commission also improved internal governance by expanding leadership representation, refining election processes, and promoting transparency and accountability.

Through proactive outreach and education, Team USA AC continued to empower athletes with resources and support, despite ongoing challenges related to athlete awareness and data accessibility. These efforts position the Commission as a vital advocate and trusted resource for Team USA athletes heading into the 2025–2028 quadrennial.



**TEAM USA ATHLETES'  
COMMISSION**

# APPENDIX

- Statement Regarding the World Anti-Doping Agency Report: [\*\*Click Here\*\*](#)
- Statements Regarding the Chinese Swimming Cases:
  - Statement 1: [\*\*Click Here\*\*](#)
  - Statement 2: [\*\*Click Here\*\*](#)
- Statement Regarding the Kamila Valieva Cas Decision: [\*\*Click Here\*\*](#)
- Statement Regarding the U.S. Biathlon Allegations: [\*\*Click Here\*\*](#)