

Date of Hearing: May 14, 2013

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, SPORTS, TOURISM, AND
INTERNET MEDIA

Ian C. Calderon, Chair

SCR 26 (Correa) – As Amended: May 9, 2013

SENATE VOTE: 37-0

SUBJECT: Wrestling: Olympic Games

SUMMARY: Proclaims that the California Legislature urges the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to continue to include wrestling as a core sport of the Olympic Games. Specifically, this resolution makes the following findings:

- 1) The IOC Executive Board recently announced that wrestling will be removed from the list of 25 core sports at the 2020 Olympic Games, though this is not final.
- 2) The IOC Executive Board will meet in May 2013 in St. Petersburg, Russia, to decide which sport or sports to propose for inclusion, and the entire IOC will vote on the final program at the IOC session, or general assembly, in September 2013 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- 3) Wrestling was one of the original sports in the ancient Olympic Games in Greece. During the ancient Olympic Games, beginning in 708 B.C., wrestling was the decisive discipline of the Pentathlon. It was the last discipline of the games to be held, after the discus, the javelin, the long jump, and the footrace, and its winner was designated the winner of the Pentathlon, the only crowned athlete of the games.
- 4) Wrestling is one of the most diverse sports in the world, with nearly 200 nations from all continents participating in the sport.
- 5) Wrestling is an inclusive sport that provides opportunities worldwide, regardless of geography, race, gender, or physical characteristics, and provides mainstream opportunities to athletes of all physical builds and body sizes, including the blind, deaf, and physically handicapped student athletes who may not otherwise have the opportunity to participate in athletics.
- 6) Wrestling builds great strength, not only of body, but also of character, including the virtues of self-confidence, self-discipline, courage, and leadership, and wrestling is recognized for serving communities throughout the nation by partnering with law enforcement, schools, and churches to provide programs to prevent and neutralize juvenile delinquency, especially gang-related crimes for many at-risk youth.
- 7) Wrestling has produced many outstanding national leaders, including Presidents of the United States, justices of United States Supreme Court, members of the United States Congress, and business and military leaders, and many outstanding leaders in California,

including many Olympic champions, such as Olympic gold medalists Dave and Mark Schultz and 2012 Olympic gold medalist Jake Varner.

- 8) More than 70 countries competed in wrestling in London at the 2012 Olympic Games with more Olympic medals awarded to a greater variety of nations than in almost any other sport.
- 9) California is the leading state in athlete membership for USA Wrestling and the state with the largest participation in high school wrestling.
- 10) Wrestling has become a pathway to higher education for many young Californians, in particular, those with a socio-economically challenged background.
- 11) Many of these young Californians dream of representing the United States on the international stage at the Olympic Games.
- 12) The California Interscholastic Federation Boys Wrestling State Championships have been hosted at Rabobank Arena in Bakersfield, California, since 2005 and the Girls Wrestling State International Championships have been hosted at Lemoore High School in Lemoore California since 2011.

FISCAL EFFECT: None

COMMENTS:

- 1) Author's Statement: According to the author, in early February the IOC Executive Board recommended that wrestling be eliminated from the Olympics starting at the 2020 games, and states, "I was appalled to learn that wrestling was being eliminated from the Olympics. Wrestling not only provides a pathway to represent our state and country on the international stage, but it also provides a gateway for many at-risk youth who through wrestling have gone on to further their education and become pillars in their communities."

"Wrestling has been a traditional strength of the United States Olympic team, with 124 medals having been awarded to the United States in the modern Olympics. There are more than 280,000 wrestlers participating in high school. Wrestling is also the fastest growing sport for girls on the high school level. California is considered one of the nation's strongest wrestling states, with the quality and popularity of the annual CIF State Wrestling Championships at the highest level."

He adds that California has produced numerous Olympic wrestling medalists, including Olympic champions Dave Schultz, Mark Schultz and Jake Varner, Olympic silver medalists Stephen Abas, Jamill Kelly, Townsend Saunders and Greg Gibson, Olympic bronze medalists Patricia Miranda and Adam Wheeler plus numerous World champions and medalists in all three styles.

- 2) IOC Final Vote to Remove Wrestling is Set for September:

According to information supplied by the author, in early February the IOC Executive Board recommended to the IOC general assembly a list of core sports for inclusion in the Olympics. Wrestling was not included in that list of core sports. The IOC General Assembly will meet

in September to vote on that recommendation. In the meantime, the IOC is evaluating the inclusion of wrestling, along with a pool of seven other sports as core sports in the Olympic Games. These include baseball/softball, karate, wushu, roller sports, sport climbing and wakeboard.

The next step in the process will take place in late May, when the Executive Board will meet in St. Petersburg, Russia. There, wrestling will compete against those seven sports for inclusion in the 2020 Olympic program. They will reduce the eight candidate sports to a shortlist on which wrestling may yet have an opportunity to be included.

According to press reports, the IOC had warned FILA, the international governing body of wrestling that its sport was at risk unless it met a mandate that all Olympic sports raise more private money, modernize with an eye toward boosting TV coverage, leverage social media and develop gender equity. [Clark: *Wrestling supporters campaign to preserve sport's place in Summer Olympics* (May 8, 2013) Washingtonpost.com]. In response to the IOC vote and in an effort to urge the IOC to reverse course, FILA fired then-President Martinetti, hired public relations consultants, proposed adding two weight classes for women, and a raft of other changes including simplifying rules to speed the action and having Greco-Roman wrestlers compete shirtless. [Id; AP, *Wrestling wants to add two women's weight classes in Olympics* (May 8, 2013) SI.com]

It should be noted that wrestling is not yet out of the Olympics. It will be contested at the 2016 Olympic Games.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file.

Opposition

None on file.

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