

Change -

The first discussions between the U.S. Ski & Snowboard, (USSS) and the U.S. Biathlon Association (USBA) began in secrecy in 2024. Most likely those unannounced and unreported meetings were initiated by USSS CEO/President Sophie Goldschmidt, who had earlier led a failed attempt to have USSS become the NGB for surfing. They took place shortly after the USBA had moved its office to Utah, in the backyard of the USSS headquarters. The discussions are not reported in any USSS or USBA BOD meetings minutes.

Most likely Ms. Goldschmidt saw USBA as a good target for her goal of creating a multi-discipline action sports governing body. Ms. Goldschmidt has said a more “central action sports” NGB could maximize commercial opportunities, fundraising and opportunities for athletes (<https://www.sportico.com>). Despite Goldschmidt having previously served as CEO of the World Surf League, the backlash to her organization’s application was swift and firm, both publicly and privately.

In a statement announcing that USSS was withdrawing from the surfing NGB process, Goldschmidt accused USA Surfing of “prioritizing “public attacks and uninformed legal threats, instead of constructive dialogue and engagement,” but declined to site the role of the Ted Stevens Sports Act as an impediment. But she admitted “reality set in that... properly integrated would have been quite damaging for our existing sports”, and that “It’s tough to get everyone on board, and *change* is hard, but I think [the opposition’s] approach and tactics weren’t how we want to operate.”

USSS is also now intending to become the NGB for American skateboarding.

In a June 25, 2026 letter to the membership of USBA, which was sent via the USBA memberships list, Ms. Goldschmidt attempted to answer questions about what *change* means for the future of biathlon and concluded by writing, “we must continue to progress and evolve to develop programs and be more successful. This requires *thoughtful change* and constant improvement.” Her letter was polite but lacked any real description of how a “Strategic Operating Alliance” would actually work. No details about “thoughtful change”!

After nearly two years of discussions, the biathlon community still has remarkably little information about why this merger is wanted, how it will operate, what problems it is intended to solve, how success will be measured, and ultimately who benefits.

Similar to the surfing community, resistance by the USBA community developed quickly. Change within organizations is inevitable, is sometimes difficult and requires a need to be prepared for it. Whether it is due to a planned initiative or unexpected situation, leadership must be prepared for resistance. Typical reasons for that resistance are:

- Failure to be sufficiently specific about the change;
- Failure to show adequately why the change is needed;
- Failure to allow those directly affected by the change to have a say in the process;
- Failure to fully understand the group or community's cultures;
- Failure to keep those affected by the change informed about it; and
- Creating and the use of pressure/coercion to attempt to effect change.

Thus far, the context of discussion and documents surrounding an alignment between the two organizations has displayed elements of each of these reasons, therefore it is not surprising that resistance developed so quickly. Discussions between the USSS and USBA have been held in private BOD meetings, secret from the biathlon community. Ms. Goldschmidt's letter admits that discussions have been on-going, and despite articulating vague opinions of why and how this is in the best interests of both organizations, she fails to clearly define the "purpose" or well-defined intentions of why USSS wants to absorb biathlon.

In addition, Bob Hall, and Jack Geirhart, by their strategies, have directly contributed to increasing resistance to the merger. Secret meetings and a lack of communication had created a sense of exclusion in any decision-making process within the USBA BOD and the general biathlon environment. Despite their peripheral justifications, the focus is really on the "money" and financial stress. There has been no effort to develop a consensus; instead, they use a "top-down" driven process. When encountering resistance and questions concerning the Federal legal constraints of the Ted Stevens Sports Act, LLC Not-for Profit regulations and the USOPC and USBA bylaws, they attempt to deflect and explain away those concerns with vague statements.

In addition, it has now become known that at the June 29, 3 hour executive session BOD meeting a "struggle session" developed during which Bob Hall became increasingly coercive and intimidating when the BOD Athletes refused to yield to his demands to vote "yes" for a proposal to join USSS. Eventually after much negotiation, an ambiguous motion was passed to delay a vote until August 29th and a committee of three, Jack Gierhart, an Athlete Representative (Chole Levins) and another BOD member was appointed to draft a "definitive Strategic Alliance" agreement with USSS.

RISK -

Rachel Steer (the former Vice Chair and Athlete Representative who is no longer serving on the BOD after a reelection loss) announced at the April 29, 2026, USBA BOD meeting that the "idea of a merger was a *risk* worth taking". Other BOD members also voiced the same.

When considering an whether a “Strategic Operating Alliance” is “*risk*” one might wonder if we are gambling on the future of USBA or is there not also the *risk* to the director who decides, contrary to fiduciary obligations, to gamble (the risk) of an adverse outcome.

It has been said that if things do not work out, we can just go back to the way it was. That is naïve, simplistic and I might add “stupid”. Whoever wants to “go back” would have to submit a brand-new application to the USOPC and meet all the membership requirements of an NGB to be recognized as such.

In summary, it appears that no actual “risk assessment” has been made. No one has clearly identified what the risk is. Has it been identified or explained clearly?

Risk is defined as: *a situation involving exposure to the possibility that something unpleasant or unwelcome will happen.*

My family taught me at an early age to “look before you leap” and consider the consequences of important decisions. That is clearly lacking here.

After consideration, I have concluded that ceding many core functions of USBA (administration, management and fundraising) and converting the USBA BOD into a “sports committee” within USSS is not a risk “worth taking”. It doesn’t satisfy the Ted Stevens Sports Act, LLC regulations or USOPC and USBA bylaws. There hasn't been any discussion of what becomes of the USBA Bylaws or one of IBU’s 2030 core targets, “to assist the National Federations to strengthen their own governance”.

How would IBU respond to allowing USBA to yield its autonomy and much of its responsibilities to a National Federation that does not belong to the IBU? We do not know.

GOVERNANCE –

Concerning the USSS’s failed effort to become the NGB for surfing, Robert Fasulo, executive director of surfing stated, that "As the IOC-recognized international federation for the sport of surfing we have already gone on record to state that there is currently only one organization that fulfills the requirements, according to Rule 29 of the Olympic Charter, to operate as the NGB for surfing in the United States, and that organization is the ISA recognized member, USA Surfing," and added "With all due respect to this process, the framework of recognition of a sole NGB that serves the interests of all the athletes, and all levels of the sport, cannot be modified outside the structure mandated by the Olympic movement."

The Ted Stevens Sports Act, requires that the USOPC;

- “...shall recognize only one national governing body for each sport..”

- *that an NGB must “demonstrate that it is autonomous in the governance of its sport,*
- *that it independently determines and controls all matters central to such governance,*
- *does not delegate such determination and control, and is free from outside restraint,*
- *demonstrates that it is a member of no more than one international sports federation which governs a sport included on the program of the Olympic Games or the Pan-American Games;” and*
- *“that sports on the Olympic Program in the U.S. must be governed by their own separately incorporated 501(c) (3), which is “recognized” by the USOPC as the NGB for the sport after having duly satisfied the Sports Act mandated NGB membership requirements”.*

A critical element of good governance is that organizations adhere to its own legal requirements. Good governance can be defined by fundamental characteristics that include:

- inclusive and democratic participation with a voice in decision-making processes; ensuring that policies reflect the needs and priorities of the community;
- the rule of law and fairness and adherence to legal frameworks;
- accountability with oversight and audits;
- openness and transparency;
- ethics and integrity;
- sound fiscal prudence through sound financial and economic management;
- leadership capability and capacity;
- responsiveness to the needs of the constituency;
- open and accessible decision-making processes, with clear communication of policies, procedures, and outcomes to foster trust; and
- consensus oriented focus seeking to mediate differing interests, promoting dialogue and compromise to achieve broad-based agreement on policies

In Jack Gierhart’s response to my question about compliance with the Ted Stevens Sport Act he stated that the;

U.S. Biathlon Association will not be dissolved but continue to exist and retain its legal status as an NGB, with its relationship to the IBU and that the integration will be facilitated through a service agreement between USBA and USSS that will assign operational responsibility to USSS. USBA will continue to have a board that will also serve as the Biathlon Sports Committee with oversight of biathlon activities, in much the same as the Cross-Country Sports Committee has oversight of cross-country skiing”.

However, in actual practice Jack's response does not comply with the Ted Stevens Sports Act requirements for several obvious reasons.

How do Jack's answers comply with the elements of the Ted Stevens Sports Act when the USBA BOD would become a "Biathlon Sport Committee" similar to cross-country skiing. Looking at that model, the USSS Cross-Country Sport Committee **has no decision-making authority** over the operations of the cross-country program. It is strictly advisory to US Ski Team activities. Its decision-making authority is confined to rules, calendaring, etc. So, in that regard, the BOD of USBA as the Biathlon Sports Committee within the USSS would effectively be powerless once a strategic alliance is completed. Transitioning the USBA BOD to a "Sport Committee" would relinquish its governance responsibilities to another organization in violation of the Sports Act. Additionally, the alliance between USSS and USBA might require USSS to become a member of the IBU and therefore be in violation of requirement that an NGB may only be a member of one international federation. In conclusion, if the USBA became a "Sport Committee," of USSS, would the IBU still recognize it as the NGB for biathlon without a legally constituted Board of Directors within a separate LLC?

The lack of adequate notice of previous meetings, coupled with all the elements of secrecy does not comply with the requirements to;

- *keep amateur athletes informed of policy matters and reasonably reflect the views of such athletes in its policy decisions;*
- *demonstrates that none of its officers are also officers of any other amateur sports organization which is recognized as a national governing body;*
- *the appearance of a "handpicked" member added to the BOD without following the By-Laws requirements for replacement of vacancies (Chapters 18-19) are not examples of good governance,*
- *and a willingness to side-step Federal law, LLC not-for-profit regulations and its own organizational by-laws is troubling.*

A "service agreement" assigning "operational responsibility" to USSS would end USBA autonomy and independent decision-making. In short a "Biathlon Sport Committee" under the USSS **would not comply with the law.**

I restate my previous position on what is now called a "strategic operation alliance" and do not feel it is a "risk worth taking". I remain unconvinced it is not in the best interest of biathlon and remain completely against a combination of NGBs.