

April 30, 2024

To Our Sailing Community,

Over the past months and even year there have been questions and statements made about athletes' roles, structure of US Sailing, changes that have been made, and actions that have been taken. We are the Sailor Athlete Council, representing the athletes. We want to help provide information and clarity on the role of athletes in National Governing Bodies (NGBs), the mission of the Sailor Athlete Council, and our role in supporting athletes as they compete in our sport.

After the debacle of athlete abuse in gymnastics and other sports, federal law was changed. The underlying theme is athletes must have an independent place and voice in the NGB. The USOPC and the Amateur Athletic Act mandate that all NGBs must have an independent group formed by and for athlete input and concerns without the filter or impact by the hierarchy that can fail athletes. Additionally, to ensure athletes were able to be heard and had a say in sport, the law requires 33% athlete representation on their board and committees elected by the athletes. At US Sailing, the athlete commission is the Sailor Athlete Council (SAC), which is comprised of experienced competitive sailors who meet certain performance criteria to qualify.

The SAC helps gather input on variety of things from the athletes to provide to the Board and relevant stakeholders, as well as identifying, holding elections, and ensuring federal law is complied with. From more than 200 registered and qualified athletes, the SAC and subsequently US Sailing board appoint key athlete members to serve as board and committee members.

Providing key feedback from athletes into the decisions that our NGB makes includes decisions on US Sailing's High-Performance programs, long-term strategy and other more mundane processes like insurance and the annual budget. The SAC is the voice of the athletes within US Sailing. Athletes also have a direct line to the USOPC to voice concerns when necessary. Having athletes in these processes is critical to ensure that our current sailor athletes receive the support and protection they require. The USOPC's investigation and report from this past fall highlight the importance to ensure athletes voices are heard. Moreover, it is the law.

With the above as background, we wanted to be sure to let our partners and supporters know that we are currently putting together a review of this year's domestic Olympic trials and the international competitions to provide a fully informed report to the Board, the High-Performance team, and the greater sailing community, which will reflect current competitors' views and experiences. It will be a public document. While we appreciate that others who volunteered at these events have shared public views, they should not be conflated with the views and experiences from the athletes themselves. Any event needs a variety of people to help make it a success, so all feedback to the Association is relevant and hopefully is provided in a manner where it can be put together to inform future efforts. L.A. 2028 is coming soon, and we all want to hit it out of the park both on the water and off.

We would also invite any Sailor Athlete to feel comfortable in using the SAC as a tool to make sure that their voice is heard. The best way to reach out to the SAC is via the [Sailor Athlete Council](#).

We also urge you, if you have not already done so, to register as a Sailor Athlete. You can do so at <https://www.ussailing.org/about/our-organization/get-involved/sailor-athlete/>.

Sincerely,

Sailor Athlete Council