Alabama • Alaska • Arkansas • Colorado • Connecticut
Delaware • Georgia • Illinois • Iowa • Kansas • Louisiana • Maine
Maryland • Michigan • Minnesota • Montana • Nebraska • Nevada
New Hampshire • New Jersey • North Carolina • Ohio • Oklahoma
Oregon • Pennsylvania • Puerto Rico • Rhode Island • South Dakota
Tennessee • Utah • Vermont • Wisconsin • Wyoming

March 5, 2013

Dr. Jacques Rogge
President, International Olympic Committee (IOC) Executive Board
Château de Vidy
Case Postale 356 1001
Lausanne Switzerland

Dear President Rogge:

As governors of states with rich wrestling traditions, we write to express our concerns regarding the recent decision by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to remove wrestling as an Olympic sport in the 2020 Olympic Games. We strongly urge the IOC to reconsider its position and vote to extend wrestling's long legacy within the Olympic Games.

Wrestling was a key sport in ancient civilization and its inclusion in the Olympics has continued to enrich the ongoing Olympic tradition. Early Olympic organizers recognized wrestling's unique and global importance by including the sport in the 1896 Olympic Games held in Athens. Wrestling has been a key part of the Olympic movement ever since.

The same spirit of competition that drove ancient wrestlers has transcended generations, and our states are the beneficiaries of this spirit. Wrestling accelerates character building. At its core, wrestling is an instinct and embodies the human qualities of hard work, discipline, and perseverance. Dan Gable, an Olympic gold medalist and former US Olympic wrestling coach, succinctly summarized wrestling's character building characteristics when he stated, "Once you've wrestled, everything else in life is easy."

Wrestling's positive impact goes beyond our states and the United States of America. Forms of wrestling have been important parts of cultures worldwide, including China, Ukraine, Japan, Russia, Turkey, and many other countries. Soviet and Russian wrestlers have won 77 gold medals at past Olympic Games. Moreover, wrestling federations exist in approximately 180 countries and the recent London Olympic Games had wrestlers from over 70 countries.

The Olympic Games are meant to provide a venue for people from all nations to overcome differences and forge lasting relationships and wrestling has contributed to these Olympic attributes. We believe that renewing or renovating the Olympics should respect key Olympic traditions. We would also encourage a transparent voting system for future votes on which sports should be included as part of the Olympic Games. As public servants, we hold transparency as a sacred principle and we would encourage the IOC to abide by that same principle.

We encourage your prompt reconsideration of your decision regarding wrestling. We hope that wrestling will continue to be an important part of the Olympic tradition.

Sincerely,

Terry E. Branstad
Governor of Iowa

Sean Parnell
Governor of Alaska

John Hickenlooper
Governor of Colorado

Jack Markell
Governor of Delaware

Pat Quinn
Governor of Illinois

Bobby Jindal
Governor of Louisiana

Martin O'Malley
Governor of Maryland

Mark Dayton
Governor of Minnesota

Robert Bentley
Governor of Alabama

Mike Beebe
Governor of Arkansas

Dannel Malloy
Governor of Connecticut

Nathan Deal
Governor of Georgia

Sam Brownback
Governor of Kansas

Paul R. LePage
Governor of Maine

Rick Snyder
Governor of Michigan

Steve Bullock
Governor of Montana

Dave Heineman
Governor of Nebraska

Maggie Hassan
Governor of New Hampshire

Pat McCrory
Governor of North Carolina

Mary Fallin
Governor of Oklahoma

Tom Corbett
Governor of Pennsylvania

Lincoln Chafee
Governor of Rhode Island

Bill Haslam
Governor of Tennessee

Peter Shumlin
Governor of Vermont

Matthew H. Mead
Governor of Wyoming

Brian Sandoval
Governor of Nevada

Chris Christie
Governor of New Jersey

John R. Kasich
Governor of Ohio

John Kitzhaber, M.D.
Governor of Oregon

Alejandro García Padilla
Governor of Puerto Rico

Dennis Daugaard
Governor of South Dakota

Gary R. Herbert
Governor of Utah

Scott Walker
Governor of Wisconsin