August 13, 2024

Dear USA Swimming Board Members,

At the conclusion of an Olympic Games and quad, we feel it is a great time not only to reflect on the past four years, but also to review and plan for the future.

We would like to begin by saying how proud we are of all the athletes who competed for Team USA in Paris. We are equally proud of the leadership of our Team USA coaching staff, and grateful for their time, effort, and sacrifice. Our appreciation is also extended to the Team USA support staff. Their contributions are greatly respected and valued.

Our observations of the Paris Olympics show that parity is the new norm in international swimming competition. The rest of the world has continually raised their bar, investing in high performance and increasing their support of athletes. While competition is healthy and brings out the best in our own athletes and coaches, there is no doubt that the United States is being challenged more than ever. The opportunity to perform our very best at the Olympic Games in Los Angeles and enhance our presence at the top of the medal table begins immediately.

The American Swimming Coaches Association is deeply concerned with current USA Swimming membership trends, our perceived weaker performance on the world stage, and significant coach feedback expressing dissatisfaction with our national governing body. We see the next four years being some of the most important in our sports history domestically.

We are calling for a well-designed and transparent quad plan, from the grassroots to national team levels, that allows our sport to capitalize on the next four years, culminating with a home Olympics. At the same time, our sport faces significant uncertainty with the evolving NIL/NCAA landscape. Ensuring that American athletes continue to have programs and resources allowing them to pursue their dreams beyond high school/club swimming is vital. How will USA Swimming club programs need to evolve to meet these new challenges, and what will USA Swimming do to help?

We are asking for, and expecting, reflection and change. If we keep doing what we have always done, why should we expect different results and perceptions 4, 8, or 12 years down the road? As you prepare to make some important decisions in the coming weeks that impact our sport and profession moving forward, we ask you to consider these recommendations:

1. Our leaders need to be held accountable for membership trends and coach dissatisfaction that have been well documented.
2. We need an experienced and accomplished coach to lead our National Team, and we need an outstanding, credible coach leader for the Junior National Team as well. The home Olympics require our best, and we feel an athlete-centered and coach-driven approach will allow USA Swimming to perform at its best.
3. The amount of staff turnover under current leadership is not only concerning, but also alarming.

4. There is currently a lack of engagement and connection with coaches that is causing our NGB to overlook its most precious resource for improving performance. The NGB's relationship with coaches must become one of respect, support and collaboration.
5. USA Swimming needs leaders who are willing to engage with ALL stakeholders and leverage their knowledge to improve every aspect of the organization.
6. The leader of the organization needs to be an outstanding communicator, listener, and someone who can inspire a sense of urgency and excitement throughout all levels of the organization.
7. Grassroots clubs, coaches and athletes must be connected to the top in a way that not only shows them the path to get there, but also takes them by the hand and leads them there.

The American Swimming Coaches Association is excited about USA Swimming's future. We stand ready to assist in any way. We are confident that if we work together (keeping our focus athlete-centered, coach-driven, and administratively-assisted), we can forge a path that will separate Team USA from the rest of the World in Los Angeles and beyond.

Sincerely,

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND CEO OF THE AMERICAN SWIMMING COACHES ASSOCIATION
Mike Murray, The Albany Academy, President
Emily Melina, Lake Oswego Swim Club Vice President
Ellen Johnston, Westport/Weston Family YMCA Water Rats Swim Team, Treasurer
Mohamed Abdelaal, Razorback Aquatic Club AquaHawgs, Secretary
Herbie Behm, Arizona State University Swimming and Diving
Paul Donovan, Jersey Wahoos
Bill Dorenkott, Ohio State University Swimming and Diving
Tim Hill, Sharks Swim Club
Mike Koleber, Nitro Swimming
Ian Murray, Dynamo Swim Club
MacKenzie Novell, Fort Collins Area Swim Team
Jennifer LaMont, ASCA CEO