

Georgia Intercollegiate Wrestling Coalition

2700 INTERNATIONAL TOWER, PEACHTREE CENTER
229 PEACHTREE STREET, N.E.
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-1601

WRITER'S DIRECT DIAL NUMBER:
404-420-4616
E-MAIL: ACL@RH-LAW.COM

August 9, 2006

VIA HAND DELIVERY

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Office of the Governor
Georgia State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Governor Perdue:

I was very pleased to hear from Susan Knox of your continuing interest in our grass roots campaign to reinstate intercollegiate wrestling in Georgia. Like Susan, I have two sons who have dedicated a good part of their young lives to the sport of wrestling, and both of them learned a great deal about discipline, commitment, hard work and self-control, which are essential to be successful in the sport. My wife and I believe this exposure to the sport has taught them important life skills and will help them handle the challenges of life going forward. Our experience is not unique, as wrestling is a very popular and growing sport in the State, at both the kids' level and high school level. In fact, it is the sixth most popular boy's sport (out of 14 sports) and the tenth most popular sport overall (girls and boys, out of 32) at the GHSA level. As Susan may have told you, its popularity was demonstrated at the GHSA State Wrestling Championship last spring at the Gwinnett Arena, which attracted approximately 21,000 spectators who cheered for almost 1,500 State qualifiers from approximately 300 schools from all around the State striving to realize their dream of becoming a State Champion.

Despite this popularity, and surprisingly to most people, there are no intercollegiate wrestling programs in Georgia! As a result, for the thousands of kids that participate in the sport in the state, there is no opportunity to continue the sport in college. Every other GHSA sport that is in the top ten boys or girls sport -- other than wrestling -- is offered and sponsored by several (in most cases, many) Georgia colleges and universities.

Our grass roots coalition of concerned parents, grandparents, and friends of the sport of amateur wrestling is appealing to our state's colleges and universities (and our state's political leadership) to sponsor and reinstate intercollegiate wrestling. At one time, UGA, Georgia Tech and Georgia State had wrestling teams. The sport has grown in popularity, yet the opportunities for kids to continue with a sport that has been a huge part of their lives, has ceased to exist unless their parents have the wherewithal to send them to an out of state school. For most kids, they are forced to give up the sport, even if they are among the most accomplished student-athletes in the state.

Thank you for expressing interest in getting further details about this situation. To that end, I am enclosing two copies of a PowerPoint presentation that we have prepared for interested colleges and universities in the State, outlining the case for reinstating intercollegiate wrestling. We

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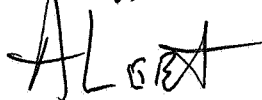
have had discussions with representatives from a number of schools around the State, including Georgia Tech, the University of Georgia, Kennesaw State and others. A narrative version of the presentation is also included in the presentation package. I also have enclosed several copies of our GIWC brochure that outlines the situation in an abbreviated format.

Governor Perdue, I believe there are a number of individuals within the leadership of our State's colleges and universities that would love to add wrestling, but for two problems - - money and Title IX. We appreciate that budgetary considerations are a constant concern for our State's colleges and universities, but note that wrestling is one of the lowest cost sports (as coaching salaries are relatively modest as are the equipment and facility needs). Title IX, as you are likely aware, has had the unintended consequence of encouraging schools to eliminate boys' sports in order to achieve the so-called safe harbor associated with Title IX "proportionality." This is, we believe, a factor that would need to be considered at a number of Georgia schools. However, it is not a factor at Georgia Tech, which is actually offering substantially greater proportionate participation opportunities to its female students than it is to its male students. As a result, among the major universities in the State, we believe that Georgia Tech is best suited to add wrestling. They do not have any Title IX limitations with respect to adding a men's sport, they are a member of a growing and prestigious wrestling conference, the Atlantic Coast Conference, and they are the kind of school that can attract the best and the brightest in Georgia as well as the best and the brightest from all over the United States. Furthermore, the cost of adding wrestling at Tech, when compared to their overall athletics budget, would be relatively modest. We met with the Sports Committee of the Georgia Tech Athletic Association in the fall of 2004 and were advised that there would be no interest in adding wrestling unless we could raise the money to effectively endow the sport (i.e., multiple millions of dollars). We intend to formally approach Georgia Tech again this fall in light of the fact that they have a new Athletic Director and the case for Tech to add wrestling is now even more compelling.

Any feedback or suggestions you can provide us would be most welcome. In addition, any encouragement you can provide to the leadership of our State's colleges and universities to take a hard look at the benefits of reinstating intercollegiate wrestling in the State would be most appreciated. We appreciate how busy you are and do not presume that this is one of the major issues for our State. It is, nonetheless, an important one to thousands of Georgia families with children who either have participated in the sport or currently participate in the sport. Thank you very much for your interest.

Best regards.

Sincerely,



Alan C. Leet

ACL:dmf

Enclosures

cc: Mrs. Susan Knox

Members of the GIWC Steering Committee