



COMMITTEE ON
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DEMOCRATS
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Pallone on Improving the International Anti-Doping System

“We are at a crossroads now at how best to prevent and police doping in sport.”

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) spoke about the importance of preventing doping in international sports at an Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee hearing on “Ways to Improve and Strengthen the International Anti-Doping System.”*

Mr. Chairman, I want to begin by thanking our witnesses today for their ongoing commitment to the integrity of competitive sports. I especially want to thank our Olympic athletes, who have faced circumstances outside of their control when it comes to doping within their individual sport. I would like to single out Travis Tygart and the United States Anti-Doping Agency who has aggressively fought for those athletes demanding drug-free competition.

In July of last year, several of us on the Committee sent a letter to the President of the International Olympic Committee expressing our strong interest in supporting efforts to ensure the integrity of sport. When we wrote that letter, the World Anti-doping Agency (WADA) had begun releasing initial findings from its independent investigation into whether Russia had engaged in institutionalized doping.

WADA’s investigation read like a cold war novel. Tainted urine samples had secretly passed through a wall and were swapped for clean samples. Agencies responsible for policing sport had actually helped athletes dope. Even the Russian Federal Security Service, or FSB, had played a role in this conspiracy according to WADA’s investigation.

Upon the release of those findings, WADA recommended to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) that it ban Russia and Russian athletes from participation in the 2016 Rio Games.

However, the IOC delegated that decision to the international sports federations, organizations that may or may not have had the independence and resources to undertake

such a task. Some critics believed the IOC's lack of decisiveness affected the role and perceived authority of anti-doping agencies.

Even today, it remains unclear what sanctions the IOC and other sports-related organizations can or will take in response to WADA's independent investigation. Collectively, these organizations must take decisive action. They must send an unambiguous message that they will punish doping and that cheaters will no longer be rewarded for creating an unfair advantage over clean athletes.

We are at a crossroads now at how best to prevent and police doping in sport. WADA's independent investigation raises serious concerns about the agencies responsible for policing doping including their ability to sanction athletes, institutions, and even countries that conspire to violate the world anti-doping code.

Despite these challenges, there are some hopeful signs of reforming the anti-doping regulatory system. In particular, I am encouraged by the recommendations made by a group of National Anti-Doping Agencies (NADOs) that could strengthen WADA's role as a global regulator in the doping fight. The group wants to ensure that WADA has the authority to investigate suspected doping violations. They also want to provide WADA additional resources so it can develop better anti-doping monitoring systems. The group of agencies also recommended removing conflicts of interest in WADA's governance structure and developing a program to protect whistleblowers who may wish to bring doping violations forward.

We all care about the international sport community, but the integrity of the international community will continue to be questioned until an effective anti-doping system is in place.

I want to thank our witnesses here today for attending this hearing so that we can identify what actions are needed moving forward to build a better anti-doping system. Finding the underlying cause of what happened and then making real changes to our anti-doping institutions based on those findings is something we must do for the athletes and the integrity of international sport.

Thank you and I yield back.

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