

**Opening Statement of Chairman Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Hearing on “Ways to Improve and Strengthen the International Anti-Doping
System.”
February 28, 2017**

(As prepared for delivery)

For centuries, athletes, cultures, and nations have been brought together by the spirit of competition. From the slopes of Olympus to the stands of Autzen Stadium—home of the Oregon Ducks—people from all walks of life have gathered to pursue and celebrate athletic achievement. We relish the anticipation, the possibility of witnessing the impossible. We celebrate the thrill of victory and agonize in defeat. Whether through your own pursuits or those of others, I suspect everyone in this room knows the emotion, collective experience, and beauty of sport.

Nothing embodies the spirit and potential of sport more than the Olympic Games. It is the hallmark of international competition, uniting people from around the world—regardless of social, political or religious differences—in celebration of our greatest athletes. It envelops national pride to the highest degree. It evokes a noble vision of sport rooted in participation over individual achievement.

There is a lot of truth to that message but we also cannot be blind to reality. Athletes and nations compete to win. They do not invest countless hours training to lose. They sacrifice for success and their victories are rewarded.

This is why, for centuries, athletes have sought performance enhancing substances - to gain an advantage on the competition. Greek Olympians and Roman Gladiators

used herbs, wine, and other products to get an edge on their opponents. In the early 1900s, mixtures of heroin, cocaine and other substances became prevalent among athletes. Over time, especially following the introduction of anti-doping testing at the Olympics in the 1970s, the drugs have become more sophisticated and the cheaters more creative. Despite improvements in global anti-doping efforts at the turn of the century with the establishment of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), the fight for clean sport remains an uphill battle. The temptation to cheat will always be present to those looking for a short-cut.

Recent events, however, revealed a far more startling and difficult challenge. Thanks to the courage and tenacity of whistleblowers, journalists, and others, we were exposed to a level of deception and cheating that felt more like a movie script than the reality of international sport. It was not a case of individual athletes looking for an edge. This was a tale of nation-state sponsored doping. Hundreds of athletes - knowingly or unknowingly - became part of a widespread campaign to enhance performance, alter test results, and evade detection by international anti-doping authorities.

Despite these shocking allegations—later bolstered by a series of independent commissions and reports—the response from the respective governing bodies of international sport has become a hodge-podge of indecisive and inconsistent actions.

So what went wrong? It is one thing for an individual to beat the system but how could such a massive program go undetected for so long? And what has the response been such a quagmire? Clearly, these events point to larger challenges in international anti-doping efforts.

That is why we are here today - to learn from the past in pursuit of a better future for clean sport. There will always be those who seek to gain an advantage— the personal and financial motivations are undeniable and the opportunities afforded by scientific innovation too tempting. The challenge is daunting and may never be totally solved. But that is not an excuse for inaction. We can and must do better, even if that requires some difficult and uncomfortable reforms.

Success in sport is not achieved sitting on the sideline, waiting for others to act. It requires leadership, teamwork and most of all dedication. The millions of clean athletes around the world, those who push the limits of physical and mental exhaustion, who sacrifice so much, deserve a similar commitment from those responsible for protecting the integrity of their sport.

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