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Q: Will wrestling retain its status as one of the core sports for the 2020 Summer Olympics?

A: Thanks in part to wrestling fans across Iowa, the popular sport may retain its status in the Olympic games after all. Uniting fans from around the world, an international groundswell of support captured the attention of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which in February voted to put wrestling on the chopping block for the 2020 games. Crossing geo-political boundaries, wrestling enthusiasts from the United States joined forces with those who share a passion for wrestling from 180 other countries, including an unlikely alliance for wrestlers from the United States and those from Russia and Iran. Considering that 71 countries sent wrestlers to the London games last summer and the sport attracts a global audience averaging 23 million viewers, it seemed incredible that the IOC chose to pull the mat out from underneath this beloved sporting event. A competition with roots dating back to the games of ancient Greece, wrestling first made its Olympic debut in 708 B.C. The astonishing proposal to eliminate wrestling by the IOC earlier this year mobilized the wrestling community into high gear.

Q: Do you support efforts to keep wrestling in the Olympic games?

A: Absolutely. In February, I introduced a Senate Resolution with Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio to put the disapproval of wrestling fans on public record. Our bipartisan resolution won

Q&A on the Fate of Olympic Wrestling with U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley

Written by Grassley Press
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Senate passage in March. And, the global wrestling community captured the attention of decision-makers at the IOC, who in late May voted to keep wrestling on a short list of finalists for a crucial vote this fall. The meeting in Russia of the IOC executive board will now be followed by a final vote in September of the general assembly in Buenos Aires. I applaud efforts of the grass roots, from athletes, their families and the fans who raised their collective voice through social media and online petitions to help continue the efforts to clinch wrestling's spot in the 2020 Summer Olympic Games. Iowa enjoys a dynamic, rich wrestling tradition, from youth programs to high school and intercollegiate competition. Anyone who has watched a match understands it takes true grit for an athlete to compete one-on-one on the mat. Win or lose, athletes score life-long lessons during training and competition, including self-discipline, self-confidence and goal-setting. Many of the best and brightest students who apply for appointment to an elite military service academy through my Senate office are high school wrestlers. Nationwide, more than 270,000 high school athletes wrestle, including more than 8,000 women. The IOC has approved 25 core sports for the 2020 Summer Olympic Games, including athletics (track and field), rowing, badminton, basketball, boxing, canoeing, cycling, equestrian, fencing, football, gymnastics, weightlifting, handball, hockey, Judo, aquatics, modern pentathlon, Tae Kwon Do, tennis, table tennis, shooting, archery, triathlon, sailing and volleyball. A few years ago, the IOC added golf and rugby for the XXXI Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. Its vote in September will decide if wrestling, squash or softball/baseball pins the 28th spot for the 2020 Olympic Summer Games.

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