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U.S.-Led Group Tries to Save Olympic Wrestling

By The Moscow Times

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USA Wrestling executive director Rich Bender knows it will take an international push to save Olympic wrestling.

The IOC executive board will meet in May in St. Petersburg, Russia, to choose which sport or sports to propose for inclusion in 2020. The final vote will be made at the IOC general assembly in September in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The first major face-to-face meetings between international wrestling officials will come next week in Tehran, site of the upcoming World Cup tournament. Bender, who leaves Monday for Iran, said he intends to meet with leaders from Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Georgia, Bulgaria, Turkey and Belarus.

"We must form a coalition. We must. The wrestling nations must work together on this," Bender said, adding that the Russian, Iranian and Japanese wrestling federations had also

begun their own plans to fight the IOC's decision.

Though Bender knows that sports that are removed from the Olympic program don't usually earn immediate reinclusion, he sees wrestling as a unique case.

The president of the International Wrestling Federation quit Saturday in the wake of the IOC's decision to remove the sport from the 2020 Olympics.

Raphael Martinetti's resignation was announced at the FILA executive committee meeting in Phuket, Thailand. The Swiss had been in the position since 2002.

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