

Russian Olympic Athletes Denounce New Participation Proposal as 'Idiocy'

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Russia's twice Olympic pole vault champion Yelena Isinbayeva.

Four-times Olympic swimming champion Vladimir Salnikov is completely against the idea of limiting Russian athletes to only being allowed to compete in two Olympics in a row, he said Wednesday.

The State Duma has proposed legislation that would ban Russians from competing in more than two successive Olympics.

The instigator was Liberal Democratic Party deputy Yegor Anisimov, who believes that double and triple Olympic champions do not give young athletes a chance to compete on the international arena.

But Salnikov, now the Russian Swimming Federation President, was scathing of the idea.

"Tomorrow someone will say let's introduce the 100 meters jump without a parachute into the Olympic program," he said.

"The person who comes up with this idea will be someone who does not have a clue or anything to do with sport," Salnikov said in a telephone interview.

"In this case, will we also gather the general mood and discuss all of this? I don't even see the point of wasting my time to talk about something that is so obvious."

Russia's twice Olympic pole vault champion Yelena Isinbayeva and double Olympic figure skating gold medallist Yevgeny Plushenko were also critical of the planned legislation.

"This is complete idiocy from someone who knows nothing about sport. This legislation has no bearing on real life," Isinbayeva told the TASS news agency.

"I think the suggestion has no place and is impossible to understand. I think such questions should be decided by experts," Plushenko said.

"I would say exactly the same, only in a different form," Salnikov added.

"I do not discuss topics such as space travel as I do not have the knowledge or competence. In the sporting world, there is a system in place to reach decisions. The International Olympic Committee governs the Olympic games. There is an Olympic charter and other documents which give one the right to compete in the Olympics."

"You can say what you like, but to make actual changes, you need to go through the correct channels," Salnikov said.

"If such a thing was discussed at an Olympic Committee Executive meeting — then I would understand. What is written and discussed should not be a cause for one to be worried."

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