

LORRIE MARCIL HOLMES
Candidate for Re-Election as At-Large Director

Dear Fellow USA Fencing Members:

I am honored to have been selected by the USA Fencing Nominating Committee to run for re-election as an At-Large Director. I was first elected to serve on the Board in 2014 and was re-elected in 2016 and 2018. I have been involved in the fencing community for nearly 20 years at many levels, through my work on the Board and various committees, and also through my daughter, Kat Holmes, an epee fencer and member of the 2016 Olympic Team. I am also a lawyer and partner in Sidley Austin LLP, a global law firm, where for over 25 years I have provided complex regulatory advice to clients, litigated on their behalf, and managed the legal aspects of large projects.

When I was nominated in January, I was excited about all of the ways in which, if re-elected, I could continue to work to move USA Fencing forward and make fencing an even better experience for our community. During my time on the Board, I have been a very active member, serving on the Audit Committee, the Ethics Committee and the Disciplinary Review Committee. I also serve on the committee that updates the Strategic Plan and evaluates progress toward its goals, as well as on the committee to update the Athlete Handbook each season, with the goal of making it clearer and more user-friendly. In these roles, among other things, I led the effort to make the Ethics Committee a Standing Committee, sponsored new rules to expand and make public the conflict of interest disclosures that officers, Board members and committee leaders must execute, was actively involved in the reforms that gave our referees a meaningful role in selecting their leadership, and have worked continuously on improved governance.

Like many of you, at the start of this year, I was looking forward to another exciting season of fencing events, tournaments and camaraderie. USA Fencing was in its best position ever. At all levels, the growth, performance and successes of our sport have been phenomenal. Through good stewardship, hard work, attention to detail and the support of our community, we were on the best financial footing in our history. I expected that I would, as usual, be at the April NAC, talking with members about issues and getting new ideas and input for our organization and sport going forward. The tsunami of COVID-19, however, has upset all of our expectations and assumptions and presented us with an entirely new set of challenges.

I am so grateful that we did the hard work to put us in a strong position to cope with all that COVID-19 has brought. I am also so inspired, although not at all surprised, by the ingenuity and resiliency of the fencing community in adapting to COVID-19 – from Zoom classes, meetings, and social gatherings to finding new and innovative ways of exercising and staying in shape while quarantining. Coaches are working hard to stay connected to their students, and athletes confined to very small spaces remain so dedicated to their training. Despite the devastating impacts of COVID-19, I know we as a community can move through this together.

Experienced leadership is critically important in times of crisis. As a current member of the Board, we have been meeting every two weeks during this crisis to support our organization, clubs, and all of our members in the best way possible. While I do not have all of the answers at

this point, I am even more committed to do what it takes to make USA Fencing better than ever. My fundamental priorities will be the same, but adapted to reflect the impacts of COVID-19:

1. Supporting our clubs, which have been suffering greatly during this period of COVID-19 closures and social distancing. The success of existing clubs and creation of new ones is critical to USA Fencing. USA Fencing is a club-based sport. Fencing clubs recruit new members and volunteers, create excitement and awareness of our sport, and promote an incredible sense of community. I will continue to prioritize helping our clubs through the COVID-19 crisis and beyond, as exemplified by my work to date in connection with the SBA payroll protection loan program under the federal COVID-19 relief package.

2. Providing excellent tournament opportunities to our members, at all levels, and in all regions, as soon as it is safe for our members and organization to do so. Everyone misses the competitive opportunities that we used to take for granted, but the health of our members comes first. We made great progress in recent years in improving the experience for participants and spectators at NACs and in the development of our referees. We will have to make adaptations in this time of COVID-19 when we resume events, which will take careful planning and close work to ensure they are the positive experiences we all want them to be.

3. Promoting a culture of respect that ensures a positive experience for all of our members, including athletes and their families, coaches and club owners, referees, tournament officials, volunteers and staff. We need to ensure that USA Fencing continues to be a leader in ensuring that all of our members feel protected and that we follow strict but fair processes in achieving that goal. During COVID-19, a culture of respect is more important than ever and I am so proud of how pro-actively supportive our community has been of one another.

4. Continuing to emphasize financial soundness. USA Fencing, like most organizations and individuals, is experiencing significant financial impacts due to COVID-19 and, in our case, the lost revenues due to cancelled events. Vigilance and active management and control of costs will be more important than ever, and identifying and new and expanded streams of revenue once the economy re-opens.

The USA Fencing Board of Directors has only 10 members. Thus, it is thus critical for each member to be able and willing to act as a leader, in the best interests of the membership as a whole, and contribute substantially to the work of the Board. I know first-hand that Board membership requires hard work and persistence. Board members must do the work required to understand the challenges facing our organization, devise the best strategies for meeting them, and lead others toward this goal. I am prepared to do exactly that. In addition, none of my income comes from fencing, so my decisions are free of financial conflicts of interest.

These are uncharted waters, but still exciting times for USA Fencing and I believe we can do great things in the next years. I ask for your vote so that I can give you and USA Fencing the support that you and the organization deserve. As always, I am eager to hear your ideas, share mine, answer questions, and discuss the priorities of USA Fencing going forward.

Best regards,

Lorrie Marcil Holmes