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Commission seeks fix for scandal-plagued U.S. Olympic Committee  
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WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Olympic Committee, beset by resignations and scandals, would be restructured and slimmed down under reforms proposed Thursday by an independent commission.

A key to the shake-up of the board of directors and executive committee is the alleviation of the friction that has long existed between the USOC's paid chief executive officer and its volunteer president.

The commission's report comes after months of study, public hearings and an outcry in Congress, where Arizona Sen. John McCain called the USOC a "dysfunctional organization that is held in low repute."

A Senate committee, following two days of hearings, appointed the five-member commission to make recommendations after a series of embarrassments that included the Salt Lake Olympic bribery scandal. A House subcommittee also held hearings into the USOC turmoil.

The past year has seen the resignations of USOC presidents Sandra Baldwin, who acknowledged lying about her academic record, and Marty Mankamy, who was accused of working behind the scenes to oust chief executive Lloyd Ward. Ward, accused of trying to steer Olympic business to his brother's company, also resigned.

Since Ward was first investigated for an ethics violation in December, eight USOC officials have resigned.

The USOC already went through one critical review. An internal USOC task force in April proposed cutting the board of directors from 125 members to nine, eliminating the 23-person executive committee and reducing the number of committees from 23 to four. Those changes are in motion.

The independent commission, created in February, was co-chaired by Donald Fehr, head of the Major League Baseball Players Association, and Roberta Cooper Ramo, former president of the American Bar Association who helped salvage the Olympics' reputation after the Salt Lake City scandal.

Other panel members were former Olympic champion swimmer Donna de Varona, NBC Sports and Olympic chairman Dick Ebersol, and former USOC executive Harvey Schiller.

Members of the commission were chosen by McCain, who is Senate Commerce Committee chairman; Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska; and Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell, R-Colo.

McCain said he wanted legislation restructuring the USOC passed by the end of July.

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On the Net:

U.S. Olympic Committee: <http://www.usoc.org>

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