

Original Letter from George Homewood to Ron Van Pool, Chuck Wielgus, Jeff Gudman, and Don Hart:

All—

As General Chair of Virginia Swimming, I am asking for your help in protecting the geographic integrity of our LSC.

This is a serious situation and one that will only get worse if left unchecked. The beginnings of a border war have existed for too long and if we are to avoid a major conflict, I'm afraid that USA Swimming will need to become involved.

Some history will help.

A decade ago, a team in Occoquan (located in Prince William County, VA) decided to move from Virginia Swimming (VSI) to Potomac Valley Swimming (PVS) because PVS is a compact LSC and no overnight travel to LSC meets is required. VSI objected so the team (OCCS) rented a PO Box in Fairfax as their "official" address and we were told by the folks at USA Swimming that there was nothing to do. But the leadership of PVS promised to not allow such things to happen again. About 5 years ago, a new pool facility was built next to the Redskins training center in Ashburn (located in Loudoun County, VA) and using the same PO Box convention became a PVS team (Ashburn Village Swim Team—AVST) for the same reason even though like Occoquan their practice facility and all of their swimmers reside in VSI territory. Almost immediately a VSI team (then Ida Lee Swim Team, now Snowbird Swimming) in Leesburg (the County seat of Loudoun County, VA) decided that it would be so much easier to not have to travel for meets—and they couldn't compete successfully for swimmers with the new AVST because of the travel issue—and so they too pulled the PO Box stunt and became a PVS team. In spite of prior promises to the contrary, the PVS leadership at the time allowed this to occur although VSI objected, especially to the Ida Lee/Snowbird switch. Now, this same Snowbird team in Leesburg wants to set up a practice group 90 minutes deeper into VSI territory—and push an existing VSI team out of the facility in the process. I have attempted to work this with the leadership of PVS, but as you can see from the response copied below, they are not going to prevent this from occurring and intimate that it is the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations that preclude them from acting in a proactive manner.

For many years, Curl-Burke (CUBU) has "cherry-picked" the cream of VSI swimmers from the area north of Fredericksburg. As best as any of us can tell, there has never been any conscious effort on the part of CUBU to do this and we've never seen any overt recruiting of our athletes. As they run a program at a level or two above many others and have had tremendous success, it is natural for quality athletes to be attracted and so we have not—and do not—have a quarrel with this. The other three teams however directly recruit from and against our teams using the "no long-distance travel to meets" as a major selling point. Virginia is a sufficiently large state where all of our LSC-wide championship meets require some teams to travel long distances and stay overnight. As a point of reference, the distance between Richmond and Abingdon where we have a team is approximately the same distance as between Richmond and New York City. It is particularly galling to have teams practicing side-by-side in the same facility with one being able to offer a substantially different meet schedule and arrangement simply because one team plays by both the letter and the spirit of the rules while the other somehow missed the spirit part and has twisted the letter part as well. And, to further the comparison with CUBU—for athletes to reside in VSI territory and swim for CUBU, they have to travel day-in and day-out to the CUBU practice facilities which are all inside the PVS territory, which in Northern Virginia is not a trifling matter. So they have lots of extra miles and time to attend practice to offset the easier time and lower cost for meets. However, for the 3 teams physically located—in all but PO Box—in VSI, there are no offsets and so the competition is entirely unfair.

In the long run, the best interests of all might be best served by eliminating the Potomac Valley LSC altogether and making the Potomac River the boundary between Virginia and Maryland—or even more radically, combine all 3 LSCs into one. In the meantime, VSI needs your help in protecting our territorial integrity. Failure to do so would not be in the best interests of USA Swimming because left unchecked, the solution will be for metropolitan areas to become compact LSCs, making more LSCs rather than fewer as the Governance Study recommended, and ultimately meaning that fewer (and perhaps in the end, no) effective programs are available to areas outside of the metropolitan areas.

Thanks for your consideration.

--G

P.S.: The players in the e-mail thread below are: Jerry Hayes, my immediate predecessor as VSI General Chair; Tag Grove, the head coach of Winchester Swim Team (WST) a VSI team of long-standing; Jim Garner, PVS General Chair; and John Hirschmann, PVS Vice-Chair.

GEORGE M. HOMEWOOD, AICP
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
New Kent County

Response from Don Hart:

George Homewood and Jim Garner,

Attached is my initial evaluation of the situation brought forward by Virginia Swimming on appropriate registration of some swim clubs who they feel should be in Virginia Swimming and Potomac Valley Swimming.

The email request for assistance is shown below.

Attached are my response to this, a map I received from George in asking for a detailed geographic perspective and a much more general set of LSC maps which came from the project on revising but not changing the boundary descriptions. For some the visual descriptions may be helpful.

I have recommended that the two LSC's review further any details to see if they can resolve the situation. I have suggested that we meet (George, Jim, Wells and I) at convention to see if we can resolve the issue and if not define the next course of action.

There are a variety of folks copied here, mostly because they were on the original request from George so for them this is a status of the first review. I believe it most beneficial for VSI and PVS to work these issues as best they can and after our discussion at convention to close on the next set of actions.

Obviously if there are other facts that come forward from PVS we can look at those at the convention.

Don Hart
Chairman, Rules and Regulations