The semi-annual meeting of the USA Rugby Congress was held this biennium on February 9, 10, 11, 2018 in Dallas, TX. Congress members gather as representatives from USA Rugby’s various constituencies for a series of meetings to act as a voice for the members of USA Rugby in the oversight of rugby in America.

The first meetings, held on Friday February 9, were within the various interests groups that the members represent. Club, College, and Youth rugby held separate meetings to discuss issues and problems unique to their particular constituencies.

On the following day, Saturday February 10 the Congress met from 8:30am to almost 6pm. The minutes for this meeting, and Sunday’s session are available as an attached document. The following is a summary of the work of this Congress.

On Saturday, Congress received introductory comments from CEO Dan Payne relating that the national teams have had the best year on record (this success continued this past weekend at the Las Vegas Sevens and in the ARC). He also related that operational funds had been restored from the deficit created by overspending in High Performance last year.

This was followed by presentations by RIM, World Cup (a RIM project), High Performance, the USA Rugby Trust, Youth, College, Club, the Nominating Committee Work Group, and Bob Latham reported on the RWC.

The majority of our time and effort was spent asking questions and clarifying information that was presented. The presentations were distributed in advance which gave the members an opportunity to inquire about specific issues and problems. However, most of what was presented to us involves issues beyond the direct control of Congress, however, some things were identified as points that merited further discussion and one resolution was passed.

This resolution was to accept the report of the Nominating Committee Work Group and immediately implement the recommendations, excepting the Bylaw change.

On day three, Sunday the 11th, Congress met from 8am till noon. The Congress received reports from the Congress, Youth, and Club members on the state of the game in these two areas. We also discussed the necessity and importance of Safe Sport, discussed our next meeting date and location, and received a report on minor bylaws changes that were necessary to bring our bylaws in line with our practice.

Because of time constraints the bylaw discussion was tabled and time was given over to our most pressing issue—RIM.

Rugby International Marketing (RIM), an independent marketing and licensing entity majority owned by USA Rugby and partly by third party investors, has been a cause of concern for Congress for the past several meetings. This concern culminated at this meeting. After reviewing the RIM presentation in advance, asking and receiving answers
during the presentation, and reflecting on the information Congress had been provided, Congress was sufficiently concerned about the practice and viability of RIM to pass the following resolution:

The USA Rugby Congress has grave concerns about the operations of RIM and its future viability. As Congress, we request the USA Rugby Board provide Congress with a detailed plan to (a) immediately undertake a fiscal risk analysis of RIM and create a plan to correct the deficits if needed, and (b) provide a business plan outlining a clear path to future commercial sustainability and viability over the next 5-10 years. This two-step plan should be undertaken by a collective group of third party experts in the field and should include an analysis, of the practice and future of RIM. The first objective should however to be completed no later than April 30 2018, with the second objective to be completed by the next Board Meeting on June 9.

Most of the Congress’s effort at this meeting was directed at addressing the problems widely perceived with the operation and practices of RIM. This resolution asks for clear and immediate action to be taken to ensure that the future of USA Rugby, as represented by the income, or usually losses, generated by RIM. While RIM has not used any USA Rugby funds to operate its business, its business practices are endangering the payments owed to USA Rugby. In addition, RIM’s failure to maximize their business model makes their long-term viability tenuous.

Despite the need to call, the Board of USA Rugby to action on the above matter this Congress meeting was applauded by the majority of representatives as the most productive yet in regards of the supply of information from the NGO and other stakeholders. With the presentations provided ahead of time and the format of the meeting changed to a Q and A format meant more interaction so that the representatives in attendance had the opportunity to review, question and analyze the data. Therefore, representatives can report to their members in a more qualified manner on what is happening within the sport at a macro level, at a geographical area and in their particular area of interest.

The next Annual Meeting of Congress will be in September but a Congress Roundtable may be convened in June as it was noted there are many more issues to address than could be reviewed and discussed. Due to decisions needed to be made in the near future key to the members and USA Rugby in general an interim meeting in person will probably needed in addition to the Monthly calls the representatives presently attend.
Thanks to the **Texas Rugby Union** who hosted a reception Friday night and our Congress Host for the meetings **Ron Watson**

Yours in Rugby

Mark Lambourne (Chair Elect, Leadership Council)
Kevin Brown (Communications, Leadership Council)