

The Legal Olympics Behind L.A.'s Bid for 2024 Games

By Nell Gluckman
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Sports industry lawyer Jon Oram chose corporate law rather than litigation in part because deals usually promise a fast turn-around—unlike the yearslong cases many of his colleagues handle.

But the Proskauer Rose partner now finds himself on a project that could keep him busy for the next decade: Los Angeles' bid to host the 2024 Olympics.

The New York-based lawyer might not seem like the most obvious choice for a city that turned to Latham & Watkins for past Olympics endeavors. Retired Latham partner Barry Sanders served as outside counsel to the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee in the years leading up to the city's 1984 games, and he led the city's unsuccessful bid for the 2016 games. (Sanders now serves as president of the Board of Commissioners of L.A.'s Recreation and Parks Department.)

But Oram (pictured right) said that despite his New York address, Los Angeles is like a second home to him. It's where his wife, Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher of counsel Lisa Rubin, grew up. His in-laws still live there, and L.A. is host to a number of his clients. He was in the city for a partnership meeting in April 2014 when L.A. sports executive Casey Wasserman asked over breakfast if he could help with the 2024 bid. Wasserman, a friend of Oram's and a long-time Proskauer client, had signed on to chair the committee that will lead the effort to bring the games to Los Angeles.

Oram said he's excited "to help do something positive for the citizens of Los Angeles," adding that it's an important market for Proskauer.

Los Angeles was formally chosen as the U.S. candidate for the 2024 Olympics earlier this month, pitting it against Rome, Hamburg, Paris and Budapest. The United States Olympic Committee had previously nominated Boston to host the games, but the city backed out amid a lack of local support and fears over funding.

Proskauer's official client is the bid committee—a nonprofit called LA 2024—but Oram said his team is also working closely with city officials to draft the proposal, develop funding structures, identify and secure venues and generally make sure all the rules are followed.

The efforts that went into Boston's bid this year were not all for naught. The L.A. team was impressed by the insurance work that Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo partner Heidi Lawson put together in Boston, and they asked her to adapt her proposal for L.A., said Oram.

Lawson's role is to craft a highly customized insurance policy that covers the bid committee, the city of Los Angeles, the U.S. Olympics Committee and the venues. Her policy is designed to protect those entities if there's a mass cancellation, which can be caused by anything from a natural disaster to a terrorism threat.



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"We didn't have to worry so much about earthquakes in Boston as you do in California, so there will be some differences," Lawson said. "Terrorism will always be different depending on the venue."

Though Latham did not work directly on L.A.'s Olympic bid this time around, the firm will still be involved as counsel to the International Olympics Committee. Almost one year ago, the firm made a high-profile raid on O'Melveny & Myers' sports, media and entertainment practice, including three partners who counted the IOC as a client: Christopher Brearton, Robert Haymer and Joseph Calabrese.

In addition, Covington & Burling corporate partner Peter Zern represented the U.S. Olympic Committee during negotiations with Los Angeles, working alongside the committee's general counsel, Christopher McCleary.

The Proskauer team includes tax partner Amanda Nussbaum, labor and employment partner Enzo Der Boghossian and insurance partner Nancy Cohen, while white-collar defense partner Sigal Mandelker is handling safety and security issues.

Long before the 1984 games and its failed candidacy in 2016, Los Angeles previously hosted the Olympics in 1932. For its current bid, Oram said the group will be working towards making the case to both L.A. residents and the IOC that the Southern California city is the right place for the 2024 games. The IOC will vote next year on the 2024 venue at a meeting to be held in Lima, Peru.

"There are a lot of people working on it," Mintz Levin's Lawson said. "It just makes it feel like the Olympics, with different teams working together toward the same goal."



Jon Oram