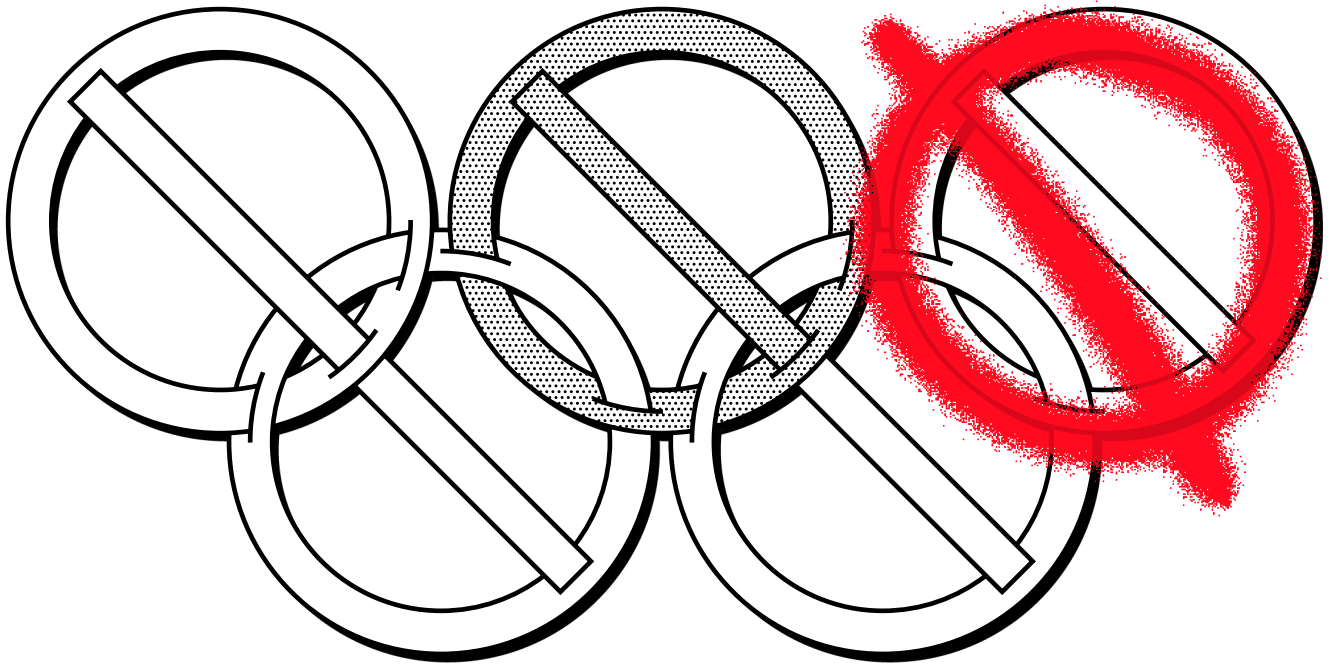


LA Olympic Bid *2024/2028 Analysis*

Democratic Socialists of America, Los Angeles



Housing and Homelessness Committee

May 2017

**DSA-LA's *Housing and Homelessness Committee*
does not support the Los Angeles 2024
Olympic and Paralympic Games bid because
an Olympics in LA—regardless of how
“successfully” it is executed—will be disastrous
for Angelenos across the city.**

Despite any good intentions expressed by the bid committee, the International Olympics Committee (IOC) is still one of the least transparent and most brazenly corrupt institutions in the modern world. Their goal is to turn a profit at all cost, not to care about the cities they invade.

If LA hosts the Olympics, it will be nothing short of a wide-reaching, incalculably destructive media party for millionaires and billionaires. The Olympics puts the interests of the mega-rich and corporate brands above the interests of athletes, fans, and working people in the cities it commandeers.

A Los Angeles Olympics (and Paralympics) would primarily service the corporate interests of the IOC and the state and national political ambitions of Mayor Eric Garcetti.

Should LA host the Olympics, we will see wide-ranging human rights' violations and the forfeiture of our city to the interests of contractors, developers, media corporations, and the special interests who designed the bid. Preparing for and hosting the Olympics will place unnecessary financial stress on the citizens of LA while also disrupting the lives of the several million people who live and work here.

There's a reason Rome, Boston, Hamburg, Budapest, Krakow, Oslo, Stockholm, and other “smart cities” have recently dropped out of the Olympic running; they listened to grassroots pressure—i.e. the actual voices in their cities—and ultimately did the right thing.

**We categorically oppose the prospect
of an LA Olympics, whether they are
“successful” or not.**

Why even a “good” Olympics will be bad for LA

These are the consequences of a “good” Olympics, where everything goes according to plan, nothing goes over budget, and there are no major ecological disasters or other crises:

1. Construction and displacement

The idea that the LA Olympics will only build “temporary structures” is misleading. While it’s true that Los Angeles doesn’t technically need to construct new buildings and facilities for the Olympics, they do need to make existing buildings and facilities Olympics-ready, which could involve extensive construction and development. These “temporary structures” will be in place beyond the three weeks of the Olympics—they will be open and operable during the Paralympics, as well as the lead-up to the Games.

We do not have any confidence that the individuals in charge of overseeing the development and construction of these sites (including those putting together the bid) will take the needs of working Angelenos, including those who are significant risk of displacement into account. Instead, it will most likely be used as a pretext for developers and politicians to advance projects that will increase real estate values and commerce in certain areas, not benefit the current residents. Even when it comes to transit expansion, which has been sold as a major selling point and benefit of hosting the Olympics, the historic record shows that the only transit expansion that occurs is that which satisfies needs during the Olympic Games themselves. We believe that transit expansion should be its own direct initiative, not just a token add-on, and should not come at the expense of current residents’ right to housing.

All of this is especially relevant in light of the affordable housing and homelessness crisis in Los Angeles, which is likely to be exacerbated beyond the Games themselves. In addition to new developments and transit that do not meet the needs of existing residents, we have seen construction and tourism in recent games lead to accelerated gentrification and displacement of existing residents, particularly low-income and immigrant residents. In [London](#), for example, the site of the Olympics Village was Eastham, which at the time was the most racially and ethnically diverse borough of London and whose residents had an average yearly household income under £29k (~\$37k). After the Olympics, the Village was converted into a mixed-use site including affordable and market rate units. To qualify for more than half of these units, households needed to demonstrate a minimum of somewhere between £48k and £73k (\$62k and \$94k)—i.e. between two and three times the typical resident of the area.

2. Commercialization and police crackdowns

Besides the literal construction of spaces to hold Olympic events, crowds, and house athletes, the Olympics also puts pressure on the host city to appear clean and unthreatening—and therefore more commercially viable for corporate sponsors. We fear that anyone who doesn’t fit the image of Los Angeles that the Olympics bid committee and stakeholders (i.e., corporations and developers) want to sell to the world—e.g., poor people, immigrants,

gender non-conforming people, disabled people, mentally ill people, sex workers—will be at high risk of displacement and police violence. In 1984, the last time Los Angeles hosted the Olympic games, [Police Chief Daryl Gates threw thousands of Angelenos of color suspected of being in gangs](#) in jail for weeks during these “Olympic Gang Sweeps,” denying them due process. This, in turn, led to the creation of fascist, lawless cop “special divisions” like [Operation Hammer](#) and [C.R.A.S.H.](#) (“Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums, responsible for the Rampart scandal). The LAPD is already one of the most militarized police forces in the United States and helped [create the idea of police militarization in America](#), in no small part through [its militarization in the ‘84 Games](#). And should LA get the 2024 or 2028 bid, we would be handing over control of local policing efforts to Federal law enforcement agencies like the Secret Service, FBI, and Department of Homeland Security for the course of the Games.

In contrast to “failed” or messy Olympics such as the ones in Rio or Sochi, which were plagued by scandals and highlighted failures of politics, public health, and infrastructure in the host city, a “successful” Olympics presents a particularly shiny positive, and profitable version of a city to the world. Dissent and criticism of local industry, city officials, corporate sponsors, etc. is not a part of that vision. When criticism threatens profit and patriotism, there is an increased incentive to crack down on all forms of protest, and the increased emphasis on nationalism provides an opportunity to frame those individuals and actions as a threat to national security. To date, the largest number of people who have died in connection to the Olympics was not the result of terrorism or a natural disaster, but law enforcement, when 300 protesters were killed at the 1968 Mexico City games.

3. Exploitation and disenfranchisement

Besides the increased risk of displacement and police violence to marginalized communities, the Olympics also threatens Los Angeles workers. LA has seen a [sharp decline](#) in unionized construction projects, and we fear the Olympics might only make this anti-union trend worse. In Rio and Sochi, the games facilitated the exploitation of builders and other temporary workers.

The bid committee’s own economic study admits that job creation as a result of the games will be temporary. From the analysis: “The bulk of these jobs would result from spending in the economy during the Games—suggesting the jobs will be temporary.” It’s quite likely that this will lead to massive influx of out-of-town temporary workers, which puts local workers in a difficult negotiating position and by creating an additional category of workers, ultimately weakens protections for and increases the likelihood of exploitation for all workers.

And, of course, the Olympic Games exploits **athletes’ labor** as a rule. American Olympic athletes typically make well below a living wage for their years of work as athletes. An LA Olympics would be an endorsement of this long-held tradition of exploitation of American labor.

The fact that the Olympics is for the benefit of large business interests is shown in the **lack of transparency** and democratic or collective decision-making in the Olympic bid process itself. Just as the people of Los Angeles had no say in the decision to submit the city

for the 2024 bid, they will have no say in how the Olympic bid is written, and should LA be chosen, no opportunity to vote or otherwise weigh in on how the Olympics are executed here. Eric Garcetti won't be our mayor in '24 or '28—who will be accountable for ensuring that it is carried out responsibly and in our collective best interests, not just the interests of wealthy residents and corporations?

4. **Diversion of resources**

Los Angeles is facing a number of critical and urgent issues that affect huge swaths of our city's population, which the IOC, Casey Wasserman, and the bid committee do not even pretend to want to address. We are in the midst of an affordable housing crisis, which is inextricably linked to our city having the highest rate of unhoused/chronically homeless people in the country. We have more people living in poverty than any other major city in America and are ranked seventh in income inequality. LAPD killed the most people out of all US law enforcement agencies in 2016 (again). Our city operates the biggest, most expensive, and overcrowded prison system in the country, and our county puts more people on death row than any other. We believe that resolving these crises as quickly and humanely as possible should be our city's priority, and that for our city's leaders and elected officials to waste this much money and energy on any other goal is unconscionable. So far, the Olympic bid committee has bragged about raising \$50 million in private funds—a staggering 14% of the estimated funds that will be raised over ten years by taxpayers through Measure H and pay for basic services for the homeless community in Los Angeles.



We believe there is no moral, ethical, or sustainable way for the LA Olympics in 2024 or 2028 to take place, and we encourage the elected officials of Los Angeles to drop this bid before the deadline of September 13, 2017.

The Olympics won't just disrupt one community in Los Angeles; this is a violent mass event which directly affects and disrupts all residents of the host city—particularly those who are already at-risk. Those who will be most negatively affected were not consulted and included in the decision to bid for the Games, and we assert that those leading the bid want nothing to do with actually improving our city or the lives of its residents.

We, therefore, reject Los Angeles's bid for the 2024/2028 Olympics and will not rest until this bid has officially been rescinded by our city leaders, the people who swore an oath to address the needs of their communities.

Case study: The 1984 LA Olympics

The 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles are frequently trotted out as a “best case scenario” for a host city—a profitable, efficiently run showcase for American values and national virtue signaling. This is a categorization that we reject and want to challenge on a number of levels.

First, profitability, efficiency, and nationalism are not our goals, and we would never define the success of any program in those terms. We would not define any Olympic Games as successful without demonstrable connection to improving the quality of life and equality in our city. The ‘84 Games did not organize and protect workers, raise the minimum wage, or provide universal access to healthcare and education. They did not end the criminalization of poverty, rampant police violence, or homelessness crisis in our city.

Second, the ‘84 Olympics were followed by one of the greatest periods of injustice and oppression and social unrest in our city’s history, culminating in the 1992 Uprising. On a purely intuitive level, we cannot accept that the ‘84 games as a “success” when they immediately preceded such a difficult and violent period that highlighted institutional failures that persist to this day. We believe that these events are not mutually exclusive, but rather inextricably linked. The 1984 Olympics marked the beginning of a period when complaints of police brutality rose at the same time that the LAPD stopped investigating or prosecuting complaints against officers, essentially creating an incentive for police to “crack down” use excessive force on certain populations (i.e., poor people and people of color). Simultaneously, the 70,000 jobs that the Olympics claimed to bring to the city disappeared quickly, leaving communities that were already struggling in the wake of the recession with astronomical unemployment rates.



And that’s not mentioning a litany of other problems

The fact that the CA and L.A. taxpayers are on the hook when the Games go over budget, the reality that the federal taxpayers will dish out \$2B in security costs regardless; the Games will displace our already-healthy tourism economy, push out film and TV productions, lose sales tax revenue (Olympics transactions are tax exempt), the exorbitant ticket prices, plus the waste, water, and other environmental quagmires, human rights abuses, sexual abuse, stress on the transit system, increased traffic, and the potential for ecological nightmares, just to name a few.

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