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Election Day Exclusive: Experts Tip Hillary Clinton for LA 2024

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(ATR) Olympic watchers say Hillary Clinton will be better than Donald Trump for the U.S. Olympic bid.

Voters in the U.S. have their say today, electing the president who will be asked to boost the Los Angeles Olympic bid as one of his or her first diplomatic initiatives. The IOC vote for the 2024 host city is Sep. 13, eight months after either Trump or Clinton takes office. Paris and Budapest are the other two candidate cities.

To be certain, the LA bid is not even a blip on the radar of the presidential candidates. Though it is understood that either Clinton or Trump will support the Los Angeles bid, neither candidate has made that declaration nor said much if anything about the Olympics during the campaign.

While LA 2024 is officially neutral for the election, the ties to the Clintons are close for bid chair Casey Wasserman. In October he hosted a fund raiser for Hillary Clinton at his Beverly Hills home. The Wasserman Foundation he heads has donated millions to the Clinton Global Initiative and Wasserman has spoken at CGI events. Wasserman has called Bill Clinton his mentor on philanthropy, the two of them pictured together in a 2013 cover story in the Hollywood Reporter. For Wasserman, his charitable and political activities carry on in the style of his late grandfather Lew Wasserman, a legendary Hollywood executive.



Bill Clinton and Casey Wasserman on the cover of the Hollywood Reporter in 2013

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, one of the country's prominent Democrats, is also a strong link to the Clinton campaign. A Clinton victory presumably would give Garcetti the ability to tap into the White House to enlist support for the LA bid. Garcetti used his pull a year ago to convince Vice President Joe Biden to speak at the last-minute to the Association of National Olympic Committees assembly in Washington, D.C.

The LA bid has a statement of support from President Barack Obama and has been in touch with members of Congress to lay the groundwork for the federal assistance needed to stage the Games. And while Casey Wasserman may have great connections to the Clinton campaign, LA 2024 CEO Gene Sykes has had talks with Republican leaders such as Speaker of the House Paul Ryan to enlist congressional support.

Getting world sports leaders and IOC members to comment on the U.S. election ahead of the Nov. 8 vote is a difficult task. They say they do not want to be seen as trying to exert undue influence.

But for those who would comment, Hillary Clinton is their choice as a better U.S. president for the Los Angeles bid.

Gerhard Heiberg of Norway is the only IOC member ATR contacted who was willing to comment ahead of the vote, based on his experience from the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer where he led the organizing committee.

"We know Hillary. I met her at the Games in Lillehammer in 1994. She was very interested in the Games. Then we met her in Singapore in 2005 in connection with the New York bid for 2012. Many of us feel that we know her and her interest in the Olympic Games," he says.

"Donald Trump is a different story, at least for the moment. I think he has scared a lot of us with the way he talks," says Heiberg.

"Conclusion, as of today, Hillary would be the right choice for Los Angeles 2024," he says.

While other IOC members have expressed a similar sentiment, none was willing to go on the record. Outside the IOC, quotable opinions were easier to find.

"Difficult to say definitively, but a Clinton presidency would seem to be more welcoming," Martin Sorrell, the chairman of advertising and media giant WPP, tells *Around the Rings*. Sorrell was one of the bigwigs for the London 2012 bid team at the 2005 IOC session in Singapore, where then-U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton was one of the bigwigs for the New York City bid.

Sorrell adds that the role of the head of state can be important for a bid, "but the bid has to be a good one".

Donna DeVarona, Olympian, broadcaster and a New Yorker like Trump and Clinton, tells *ATR* that Clinton has more experience to offer the Los Angeles bid.



U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton at the 2005 IOC Session.(ATR)

“Former First Lady, Senator and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (and Bill) have a proven track record in supporting the Olympics and international sports not to mention Title IX as well as focusing on creating WADA and USADA,” DeVarona notes, adding that Clinton family attended the 1994, 1996 and 2000 Olympics.

“To be fair, Trump also has a passion for sport, but he is unknown in the Olympic world and during my travels I have found his rhetoric presents what many have expressed as a liability,” DeVarona says about the Republican presidential candidate.



Donald Trump runs with the Olympic torch on June 19, 2004 on Fifth Ave in New York.

Trump did carry the Olympic torch in New York City when the torch relay for Athens 2004 passed through the U.S. But formal comments about the Olympics have been limited to beating up Barack Obama for going to the 2009 IOC Session in Copenhagen. Despite personal appearances by Obama and the First Lady, his hometown of Chicago was eliminated in the first round of voting for the 2016 Games.

“Do you remember when the President made a long and expensive trip to Copenhagen, Denmark to get the Olympics for our country, and, after this unprecedented effort, it was announced that the United States came in fourth place?” Trump asked in a speech in August, a point he has made a time or two since 2010.

“He should have known the result before making such an embarrassing commitment,” Trump says.

U.S. sports marketing executive Rob Prazmark says the Clinton connection is an advantage for Los Angeles while Trump may be a liability.

“The Clinton Global Initiative receives high marks within the international community and provides a great degree of credibility to a Clinton presidency as it relates to LA2024’s chances of victory. Casey Wasserman is a personal friend of Bill Clinton, which can only assist the LA2024 cause.

“On the other hand, a victory by Trump could do just the opposite and create indecision in the eyes of the IOC. I believe the IOC and the entire Olympic movement is looking for stability, consistency and calm moving forward. By most reports, the entire country and political structure of France is behind their bid,” Prazmark says.

A consultant to past Olympic bids who asked for anonymity delivered a cynical perspective of the U.S. election that goes not bode well for the LA bid, regardless of whether Clinton or Trump wins.

“Sadly the rest of the world looks on in disbelief at what can only be described as the “mother of all bizarre elections”. It brings back memories of the incompetence of the 2000 election and its hanging chads and multiple other failings. None of this speaks well of the U.S. and its ability to do things properly,” he says.

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For general comments or questions, click here (mailto:comment@aroundtherings.com?subject=Around the Rings).

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