

# A Long and Winding Road

## IOC/USOC Relations, Money, and the Amateur Sports Act

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*In November 1978, U.S. President Jimmy Carter signed Public Law 95-606, known as the Amateur Sports Act (ASA), into law. It represented the U.S. government's legislative response to the findings of the President's Commission of Olympic Sports struck by Carter's predecessor, President Gerald Ford, in 1975. Declining U.S. international sport results in the Cold War era, the surging levels of success enjoyed by Soviet athletes, and others from behind the "Iron Curtain," as well as a dismal outcome for the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) at the 1972 Munich Olympics where administrative bumbles and disappointing athlete performances grabbed the headlines, pushed Ford, and eventually federal legislators, to intervene. The central purpose of the ASA was to streamline the administration of U.S. Olympic affairs, and place the USOC in a better position to administer U.S. interests as a means of effecting change to the Olympic results table (by country). Less well known, or reported, at the time, were clauses that strengthened and broadened the USOC's exclusive rights to the use of the Olympic five-ring logo in U.S. territory. USOC officials had lobbied Congress in advance of the passage of the ASA for enhanced legal protection for the USOC's rights to the use of Olympic marks and emblems. It would be a number of years before USOC officials truly understood the revenue generating platform that it had also received through these changes to the ASA. In the 1980s, it employed the ASA as leverage to obtain significant shares of U.S. Olympic television revenue and money flowing from the fledgling TOP (The Olympic Program, now The Olympic Partners) global corporate sponsorship program. This paper charts the genesis of the ASA and the manner in which it steered IOC/USOC relations concerning Olympic revenue during the IOC presidencies of Juan Antonio Samaranch (1980-2001) and Jacques Rogge (2001-2013), and demonstrates that the ASA served as a festering source of friction that damaged inter-organizational trust. Towards the close of Rogge's presidency both sides took steps to address this issue, ultimately resulting in a means of distributing U.S. television and TOP funds acceptable to the USOC and IOC through 2040.*

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