

FOURTH-PLACE MEDAL



- Tue Dec 22, 2009 11:01 am EST

[Will the Olympics ever come back to the United States?](#)

By [Chris Chase](#)

Barack Obama's [arrival in Copenhagen](#) this past October for the IOC host meeting was to be the final salvo in Chicago's all-out bid to host the 2016 Summer Olympics. With anti-Americanism around the world supposedly on the decline because of the new American president, his presence seemed like it would clinch an already sure thing. Hours later, Chicago, the heavy favorite, was [eliminated in the first round of voting](#).

Post-mortems detailed what went wrong: Chicago was overconfident, Obama left town too early, the worldwide negative perception of the [U.S.](#) left in the wake of the George W. Bush administration was too much to overcome. None of those things mattered. The IOC isn't about real politics, it's about IOC politics. The 100 or so voters who bid on the Olympics don't care about American hubris or military missions in [Iraq](#) or the exchange rate between the dollar and Euro. They care only about the IOC and the money it has in its coffers.

Amy Shipley details this in an [excellent piece in Tuesday's Washington Post](#). The anti-Americanism in the organization (which we had [predicted would derail Chicago's bid](#)) manifested itself in this vote not because of Bush or Obama, but because of the perception that the United States Olympic Committee is taking too much money out of the IOC's pockets.

Even though a bulk of the IOC's television and sponsorship deals come from the U.S., the international body wants even more of it, so it's willing to voice its displeasure in the only way it can: by voting to keep the Olympics off American soil. The theory is that the U.S. will eventually come crawling to the IOC to re-work the financial agreements so the Games can return Stateside.

But, as Shipley points out, maybe the IOC has gone too far. Chicago's embarrassment makes it far less likely that any major American city will want to bid on the Games again. Why spend \$70 million just so IOC members can play politics with a vote? The IOC has shown it's more than willing to cut off its nose to spite its face. What's the incentive to ever test them again?

What the IOC doesn't realize is that it needs the USOC much more than the USOC needs it. The Olympic movement isn't going to die out in America, but the flame might grow to a flicker if the IOC doesn't address this petty problem soon. Americans have short attention spans and even shorter memories. By the time the next Olympics could possibly come to the States (2020, even though 2024 is more likely), a full generation won't know what it's like to see the Games on native soil. And with that long lag time, who's to say they'll even care if they are?

