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## Olympic Commemorative Coins: Background and Considerations for Congress

The U.S. Mint produces commemorative coins pursuant to a specific act of Congress. These coins celebrate and honor American people, places, events, and institutions. Although they are considered legal tender, they are not minted for general circulation. Instead, they are designed to be collected (numismatic products) and to help a specified statutorily designated group(s) raise money.

In 2028, the City of Los Angeles will host the Summer Olympic Games. Historically, Congress has authorized commemorative coins to celebrate the Olympics. For five previous Olympiads, Congress has authorized commemorative coins to honor the Olympic Games and Olympic athletes. Three of those instances were for Olympic Games held in the United States—1984, 1996, and 2002—and twice to honor American Olympic athletes for games hosted by other nations—1988 (Seoul, South Korea) and 1992 (Barcelona, Spain, and Albertville, France). In each case, the legislation designated the United States Olympic Committee as the recipient for at least some of the coins' surcharge payments. For the three Olympics hosted in the United States, surcharge payments were also directed to the host cities' Olympic organizing committee.

The Olympic Coin Program reaped great rewards for U.S. athletes in the 1984 Los Angeles games.... The United States won more medals than any other country in history in the 1984 games and I hope today's legislation will provide valuable assistance so that our athletes can equal or better that record in 1988.

—Representative Chalmers Wylie, *Congressional Record*,  
August 6, 1987, p. 22757.

### Olympics in the United States

Since 1984, the United States has hosted the Olympics three times: 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, CA; 2000 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, GA; and 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, UT. In each instance, Congress has authorized commemorative coins to honor the Olympic Games and participating athletes and to provide surcharge payments to designated Olympic organizations to help financially support the Olympic Games.

#### 1984 Los Angeles Olympics

In 1982, Congress authorized commemorative coins for the 1984 Los Angeles Summer Olympics (P.L. 97-220). Three coins—two silver dollars and one \$10 gold coin—were authorized for the 1984 Olympics, with proceeds split

equally between the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee and the United States Olympic Committee. **Figure 1** shows the 1984 “Coliseum” Silver Dollar.

**Figure 1. 1984 Los Angeles Olympiad “Coliseum” Silver Dollar**



**Source:** U.S. Mint, “Los Angeles Olympiad Coliseum Silver Dollar,” at <https://www.usmint.gov/coins/coin-medal-programs/commemorative-coins/1984-olympics-coliseum>.

#### 1996 Atlanta Centennial Olympics

In 1992, Congress authorized a total of 16 commemorative coins for the 1996 Centennial Summer Olympics in Atlanta (P.L. 102-390): two half dollars, four silver dollars, and two \$5 gold coins to be issued in 1995 (8 coins) and 1996 (8 coins). In 1995, the half dollar coins honored baseball and basketball; the silver dollars honored gymnastics, cycling, track and field, and the Paralympics; and the \$5 gold coins depicted a torch runner and the Olympic stadium. In 1996, the half dollar coins honored swimming and soccer; the dollar coins honored rowing, tennis, the high jump, and the Paralympics; and the \$5 gold coins depicted a flag bearer and the Olympic cauldron. Proceeds were split equally between the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games and the United States Olympic Committee. **Figure 2** shows the 1996 cauldron \$5 gold coin.

**Figure 2. 1996 Atlanta Olympics “Cauldron” Gold \$5**



**Source:** U.S. Mint, “Centennial Olympics (Cauldron) Gold \$5,” at <https://www.usmint.gov/coins/coin-medal-programs/commemorative-coins/centennial-olympics-cauldron-gold>.

### 2002 Salt Lake City

In 2000, Congress authorized commemorative coins for the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics (P.L. 106-435). Congress authorized two coins: a silver dollar and a \$5 gold coin. The law designated that surcharges from coins sales be equally split between the Salt Lake Organizing Committee for the Olympic Winter Games of 2002 and the United States Olympic Committee. **Figure 3** shows the 2002 Olympic Winter Games Silver Dollar.

**Figure 3. 2002 Salt Lake City Olympic Silver Dollar**



**Source:** U.S. Mint, “Olympic Winter Games Commemorative Silver Dollar Coin,” at <https://www.usmint.gov/coins/coin-medal-programs/commemorative-coins/olympic-winter-games-silver>.

### Olympics Overseas

Congress has twice authorized commemorative coins to honor American athletes participating in an Olympic Games that occurred outside of the United States: the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul, South Korea, and the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona, Spain, and Winter Olympics in Albertville, France. The authorizing legislation directed surcharge payments from coin sales to the United States Olympic Committee. **Figure 4** shows the 1988 Olympiad Silver Dollar and the 1992 \$5 gold coins.

**Figure 4. 1988 Olympiad Silver Dollar and 1992 Olympic Gold \$5 Commemorative Coins**



**Source:** U.S. Mint, “Commemorative Coin Programs,” at <https://www.usmint.gov/learn/coin-and-medal-programs/commemorative-coins>.

### Future Olympics Commemorative Coin

The City of Los Angeles is to host the 2028 Summer Olympic Games. In the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress (2021-2022), legislation has been introduced (H.R. 8047 and S. 4382) to authorize the U.S. Mint to issue Olympic commemorative coins in 2028, with the surcharge payments designated to the United States Olympic and Paralympic Properties, a joint entity of the LA2028 organizing committee and the United States Olympic Committee “for the objects and purposes related to the hosting of the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games and to aid in the execution of its legacy programs, including the promotion of youth sports in the United States.”

### Considerations for Congress

Should Congress consider and enact legislation to authorize commemorative coins for the 2028 Los Angeles Summer Olympic Games, it would be the fourth time that commemorative coins have been issued for an Olympic Games hosted by the United States and the sixth time overall that commemorative coins have had an Olympic theme. Should Congress consider 2028 Olympic commemorative coin legislation, several elements might be discussed. They include

- authorized coin denominations;
- authorized number of coins per denomination;
- specific design instructions; and
- surcharge designated recipient group(s).

For more information on commemorative coins, see CRS In Focus IF10262, *Commemorative Coins: An Overview*, by Jacob R. Straus; and CRS Report R44623, *Commemorative Coins: Background, Legislative Process, and Issues for Congress*, by Jacob R. Straus.

Jacob R. Straus, Specialist on the Congress

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