

Winston & Strawn Hails New Victory for Gender Equity in Sports

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Women to Compete in International 50km Race Walks

NEW YORK – In another significant achievement for gender equality in sports, the Winston & Strawn LLP [Sports Litigation Practice](#), on behalf of champion race walker Erin Taylor-Talcott, successfully petitioned the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) to permit women to compete in the 50km race walk for the first time in history.

According to the IAAF, in a decision announced April 8 from its Monaco headquarters, women can now qualify for and compete in all IAAF 50km race walk events under the same standards as men. The IAAF Council voted to allow qualifying women to compete together with men in the forthcoming IAAF World Race Walking Team Championships in Rome next month, as well as all future 50km race walking events. Additionally, the decision allows all women's results in Rome to count equally with the men's towards the overall team result.

Reacting to the news, Ms. Taylor-Talcott said, "This is such a huge and amazing step for women's rights and for female race walkers all over the world. I'm feeling so many emotions right now, but the main one is excitement to get out on the course ready to race my hardest against the best in the world. Thank you to everyone that made this possible."

"Our firm is proud to represent Erin as she wages this quest for gender equity on behalf of female athletes everywhere," said Jeffrey Kessler, Winston co-chairman and co-chair of the firm's Sports Litigation Practice.

Winston previously reached a settlement with USA Track & Field (USATF) that provided for equal prize money to be awarded at all USATF race walk events regardless of gender and called for the organization to advocate for women's participation in the 50km at the international level, which for years was reserved only for men. As part of that 2014 agreement, Ms. Taylor-Talcott was also retroactively awarded prize money for her first-place finish in the women's 2013 USATF 50km Race Walk Championship.

That settlement paved the way for Ms. Taylor-Talcott and another American woman, Susan Randall, to compete on behalf of Team USA in the first international 50km race walk for women, the 2015 North America Central America Caribbean Association Race Walking Championships in Chile last May. Ms. Taylor-Talcott finished first in that historic race, which was conducted in conjunction with the men's 50km event at the 2015 Pan Am Race Walking Cup.

“During the race, people from all over the world were lined up along the course cheering for Susan and me as though we were from their country,” said Ms. Taylor-Talcott. “I wish I could accurately recount the emotions I felt being on the award podium after the race. It was a dream come true.”

After that race, Winston petitioned the IAAF to allow qualifying women to compete similarly in all future IAAF 50km race walk events, resulting in today’s historic announcement.

Ms. Taylor-Talcott, 37, won her first junior national championship as a teenager and has since medaled in distances ranging from 1,500 meters to 50 kilometers. She participated in the 2012 Olympic trials, but was informed that she could not enter the men’s-only 50K race walk during the 2012 Summer Olympics in London, even if she secured a qualifying time. Ms. Taylor-Talcott faced a similar barrier in 2014 when she earned a qualifying time in the 50K race walk, but was not permitted to compete in that event at the World Race Walking Cup because IAAF only conducted races for men at that distance. At the time, she was only able to compete in the 20K event.

Winston attorneys including Mr. Kessler, New York Partner and Co-Chair of the Sports Litigation Practice David Feher, and Associates Timothy Nevius, Joseph Litman, Rebecca Litman, and Isabelle Mercier represented Ms. Taylor-Talcott on a pro-bono basis in her efforts to advance gender equality in sports.

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