

# LA Clippers Media Conference

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Los Angeles, California, USA

**Steve Ballmer**  
**Adam Silver**  
**Mayor Karen Bass**  
**Mayor James T. Butts,**  
**Jr.**

## Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good morning, everybody. I am Kristina Pink with Valley Sports SoCal and NFL on FOX. Thank you so much for joining us.

First, before we get started, I want to welcome a few special guests we have in the house: Clippers president of basketball operations, Lawrence Frank, and Clippers advisor, Jerry West. We also have some NBA staff visiting us from New York, as well.

Again, thank you for being here.

Now, to kick things off, it is my pleasure to welcome Clippers president of business operations, Gillian Zucker.

GILLIAN ZUCKER: Thanks. It's great to see you all here. Welcome to Intuit Dome. I hope you'll excuse our mess. We're currently under construction. But it won't last much longer. We're set to open the doors of our new home in just seven months, August 2024 is coming soon.

When you embark on a project of this magnitude as we did almost nine years ago, you assemble the best roster of talent you can find. I want to thank our project team, including designer AECOM, the AECOM Hunt Joint Venture, CAA Icon, our representatives on the ground, and more than 50 firms employing thousands of workers who have been integral in the design and construction.

Intuit Dome is the ultimate manifestation of Steve's vision, everything a basketball arena, a concert venue, and a community center should be. Bringing it to fruition takes a cast of thousands, many of whom were able to join us here



today.

Our local government officials from Inglewood and Los Angeles, we thank you for joining us. And Mayor Karen Bass, congratulations on your first year in office.

Please help me welcome great partners such as Intuit and a special welcome to Abby Smith and Lionel Mohri and our Intuit Dome partners, AT&T, Pechanga, Kia, TicketMaster, Globant, Daktronics, and Lexus.

We also have with us today representatives from the LA Sports and Entertainment Commission led by the incredible Kathy Schlossman who continues to attract high-profile events for us. Thank you, Kathy, for your support.

Now we welcome a special guest who we were able to coax into a construction vest today all for the sake of a very important announcement. NBA commissioner, Adam Silver, thank you for being here.

ADAM SILVER: Thank you, Gillian, and Mayor Butts gave me special dispensation. He said, I'm in charge here. You won't have to wear this helmet for five minutes.

Hopefully we'll be okay for the next few minutes.

They're under such a tight schedule here that we said, can you stop the sawing for eight minutes, and they said, no. That's the only way we're going to be able to open on time. I'm going to get right to the point.

It is my absolute privilege to announce the 2026 NBA All-Star Game will be held here in Inglewood at this brand new Intuit Dome. Congratulations, everyone.

There are just a few words about our All-Star festivities. I know Steve has been calling this building basketball heaven. That's what we used to call All-Star, so I've got to come up with a new name. So it's basketball heaven is coming to basketball heaven. I'll work on that.

But people in LA are familiar with our All-Star festivities. These games are distributed in more than 200 countries. It's not just the All-Star Game itself. There are events throughout the week.

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I have the opportunity to get the deluxe tour from Gillian and Steve this morning of this building. Not only are there five courts, there's technology that is unmatched in any facility I've ever seen. I think there's no doubt Steve and Gillian have been meticulous in looking at every single detail.

And on beyond that, I think we all agree that once the building opens there will be more things they realize they can do differently.

I can just say that having been, I think, to pretty much every basketball arena in the world probably over the course of my many years at the NBA, I eagerly await the first opportunity to see a Clippers game here in this fantastic Intuit Dome, and then of course all NBA fans are eager to see an NBA All-Star Game here.

Thank you to the community. Thank you, Mayor Butts. Thank you, Mayor Bass, for your hospitality.

I thought this was the point. Steve Ballmer is about to speak, gentlemen and madams, so the energy level is about to come up another notch. Without further ado, Clippers chairman Steve Ballmer.

STEVE BALLMER: I've got to ask a question here. Mayor Butts, you're the boss; can I take mine off, too, please?

Thank you very much, Adam. It is wonderful that you're here, and I'm even happier with the announcement that you made. It is such an honor for us to be able to host an All-Star Game. I can't even tell you. I was giddy when I heard it was possible, and even giddier when the league told us that we'd have the All-Star Game here.

I'll switch away from heaven of basketball if you'd like, and I'll just say we want this to be the penultimate basketball experience on the planet, as good as it gets, the pinnacle, the peak.

Now, of course some year somebody will bypass us, but man, we put everything into getting ahead of that in this building. This is the primary thing. Yes, we have clubs and lots of bathrooms, 1,500 something different facilities -- we can't call them toilets because they're not all toilets. But this is the featured item. This is the intensity. This is where we need the crowd roar, right here in the bowl.

We spent a lot of time thinking through the details of this. How do you get people in and out quickly? Bathrooms and concessions need to be fast. How do you get people to cheer? We'll actually check the decibel level and let you know how loud you've been. You want to get some food?

Walk out, just grab it. Bring your game face we call it and grab your food and beverage. No cashier or anything else. Walk out with the food you want, get back to your seat pretty quickly. So we need to support this.

You can see some of the steepness here. If you look where you can't see behind me is what we call our wall of sound. It's 51 rows top to bottom. It's steeper than anything you see from this vantage point, to try to bring the fans in closer to the game. That'll be what we call a Clipper-only zone. Some of you may notice sometimes because all the transplants here in LA we'll see people from other places.

But you actually have to register for what we call a Chuckmark, our mascot. You have to follow us on Instagram. You have to buy a jersey. You have to have been a season ticketholder, three or four different things you can pick from. But you're not going to sit there if you're not really on our team, and that's the big wall that I'm really excited about.

Seats. The seats are generous in their leg room and in their width. We took what we saw in other NBA arenas and we tried to go a step further. So you have actually the same depth of step top to bottom, all the way to the upper bowl. The upper bowl gives you a little more headroom and the lower bowl a little more leg room, but we've been working hard on that.

Stay in your seat or get up. You get up, we're going to know that you stood up as long as you want us to. You've got to give us the permission. We'll know that you got up, we know you cheered, we know how loudly you were cheering. If you're good on those things, we give you discounts around the shop to reinforce that excellent behavior that we want and need of our fans to make this thing rocking.

Our fans have a role to play with our team. This isn't just for the fans to enjoy the experience. If our fans do their job right, it's going to help our team play better, and that's super important to us.

I'm excited about all those things and many more, if you want me to get going for half an hour, which nobody does. I'm well over my time now. But I'm happy to.

Key dates. We're really excited for this year's Playoffs, even though they won't be here. I am excited for this year's Playoffs. And I know Clipper Nation will be.

August we get to move in here. We move in in June. We have our first opportunities for concerts by middle of August, but we'll already have had an event with 10,000 or



so people to test things out and really put it through its paces.

Then of course there's our grand opening in the 2024-25 season.

We are appreciative that the league gave us a year to get our act together so that we can be not just perfect, but perrfect when the All-Star Game comes here.

Think, if you want to have the pinnacle of basketball, you have to have the very best players in the world playing here, and we're just beyond delighted.

When Mayor Butts and I first met in January of 2016, we couldn't have hoped for the All-Star Game this early. In a way, I'm amazed it took us almost nine years, eight and a half with the mayor, to get this done, but I'm delighted that we're done and will be here.

We're all getting ready. We're all getting prepared.

I want to have a special shout-out again to the architects at AECOM and the construction guys at AECOM Turner. I get over here at least once a month, maybe more, and the guys are just -- to me, construction is amazing. I look around here and say, how is this going to be done by the end of June, and they just say to me, we gotcha. We gotcha.

Thank you all again, and thank you, Mayor Bass, but really thank you, Mayor Butts.

This guy is a driving force, and you'll hear that now. Mayor Butts to the podium.

JAMES T. BUTTS JR.: All after that, all I can give you is history. I've been with the city of Inglewood since 1972 in the police department. In that time, I got to meet Jerry West, the logo, Shaquille O'Neal, Kobe Bryant, Byron Scott, Steve Ballmer - let's hear it for Steve Ballmer - but now after 13 years as mayor, my career is complete because I got to meet Adam Silver, the commissioner.

Adam Silver, my good friend Steve Ballmer, Mayor Karen Bass of the great city of Los Angeles, and fans of the greatest professional basketball league in the world, welcome to the latest chapter of the Inglewood, Los Angeles, version of the Hunger Games.

LA would be the capital where the citizens were all well-fed and Inglewood would be the pan. This all started in 1968 when Jack Kent Cooke carefully selected Inglewood as his choice in which to build the fabulous forum, now the Kia Forum owned by Steve Ballmer. He loves the game of

Monopoly.

In 1999, Los Angeles lured the Lakers and Kings of the National Hockey League back to the city of Los Angeles. Within 11 years, Inglewood would be on the verge of municipal bankruptcy, and I would be fortunate enough to be elected mayor in that year.

It's sad that revenge is a dish best served cold and it would take 21 years, but in 2020, the NFL Rams would leave the Los Angeles Coliseum for Inglewood and would be joined by another former Los Angeles team, the Chargers.

In January of 2016, Steve, Dennis, and I met at the Ritz-Carlton in Marina del Rey, and eight years after that meeting, the Clippers would play basketball in the City of Champions.

Now, the trifecta is complete. In 1983, 41 years ago while I was a lieutenant in the Inglewood Police Department, Inglewood hosted the All-Star Weekend at the forum. The 1983 All-Star Weekend and the '84 Olympic basketball games and Super Bowl LVI up to now are the biggest events ever held in the city of champions.

This All-Star Weekend will be the greatest event ever held in the greatest arena in the world, the Intuit Dome.

Together, Mayor Bass, LA, and Inglewood will continue to bring international sports and entertainment to the county of Los Angeles and to the world for decades to come. Thank you, guys, very much.

I want to introduce my partner, Karen Bass of the great city of Los Angeles.

KAREN BASS: Good afternoon. What an amazing way to start a day. It is very exciting to be here, and it's very exciting to be here with this gentleman, the mayor of Inglewood, Steve Ballmer, Adam Silver.

It is a very exciting day because we are thrilled with this announcement that the Clippers and the city of Inglewood have been selected to host the 75th NBA All-Star Game in 2026 where there is a long and storied history of basketball.

I want to thank the commissioner, the mayor, the Clippers organization, and I want to recognize and thank our LA Sports and Entertainment Commission for their tireless efforts to bring world-class events like this to our global city.

Today's announcement is exciting for all of us, and I especially want to focus on the mayor here because I call

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him the transformative mayor. When you talked about the history and Inglewood, what you have done, what he has done in his tenure as mayor, I told him I want to be like him when I grow up, so give him another round of applause.

The economic advantage that this event will bring, I want to highlight this event brought more than \$100 million of economic impact when our region last hosted it six years ago.

Looking ahead to NBA All-Star Weekend 2026, it's projected to generate more than \$350 million in economic and media impact for the greater Los Angeles area. That is amazing.

Just think, that's 2026, when there will also be the World Cup, 2027 Super Bowl, 2028 the Olympics. Oh, my goodness, all of those events can be transformative to our region, and I am just very proud to stand here with my partner and colleague, Mayor Butts, and I know there is so much more to come from our area.

This is amazing. I look forward to being here in June when Mayor Butts will give the state of the city and then back here in August. Thank you so much.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much, Mayor Bass. Now, we do have a few questions for you guys, so I'm going to start with the commissioner, Adam.

Basketball heaven returns to LA. This is an exciting thing. What can fans expect from All-Star 2026?

ADAM SILVER: I think you heard from both mayors from past experience having the All-Star festivities both here in Inglewood and Los Angeles that it becomes the center of the basketball universe.

As I said, not only will the basketball games be contributed in over 200 countries, partners of the league, basketball fans from all over the world will come here, as well.

As you heard, the estimated economic impact will be roughly \$350 million because there's so many activities throughout the week, clinics, concerts, fashion shows, social justice forums, everything that the league is involved in we touch on over the course of the time we're here, and that's why it's so impactful to communities when we bring All-Star.

THE MODERATOR: Steve, the penultimate basketball experience looks amazing already, so what are you most excited about the Clippers and Intuit Dome hosting All-Star 2026?

STEVE BALLMER: Well, to me, I'd say two things. Number one, look, if you want to be penultimate in basketball, the best way is to have the best players in the world. Sports is amazing, by the way. I worked in business. There's a lot of competition.

But in sports, you actually know who the best people in the world are who do something. I can't even imagine what it's like for somebody to be able to say, yeah, I know I'm in the top 24, to take this game everywhere in the world. To have that group here is the ultimate honor I'd say for what we're trying to accomplish with the building.

THE MODERATOR: Going to turn to Mayor Butts. Inglewood has already been very successful attracting global events to the City of Champions. How would you describe what the return of All-Star means to Inglewood?

JAMES T. BUTTS JR.: To put it in perspective, we've had a Super Bowl. We've had NCAA championship, bowl game here, we've had Wrestlemania. Between 2026 and 2028, we'll have the World Olympic Games, Super Bowl LXI, and the ultimate basketball competition, the NBA All-Star Game.

There is no city in the history of the world that has had three international events in three consecutive years. That's what it means.

THE MODERATOR: We love to see it.

Mayor Bass, Los Angeles is quickly becoming the epicenter of sports and entertainment. What does today's announcement mean for Los Angeles?

KAREN BASS: It's amazing because it's the synergy in the region. It's the economic benefits, obviously to Inglewood. We're right down the street. We view things as a region. Our cities are next door to each other. So it's the economic engine that is vital and essential for our area.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Now, we are going to open it up to a few questions.

**Q. Steve, what does this mean to have Adam Silver there on the stage with you today? What does it mean to you that the NBA says we want you and this amazing arena to host an All-Star Game?**

STEVE BALLMER: It means a lot. Start with the fact that -- I said, who's the best player in the world. I could say who knows more about basketball in the world than Adam Silver does. Yeah, you have a team; I know how CEOs do that. But the CEO also gets exposed to more things than anybody else.



So this guy knows the game, and between his staff and with assent, they said, yeah, we'll take a risk. I think this is probably the first time an All-Star Game has been awarded to a building that hasn't opened yet, and again, it's an honor for me to have somebody who knows the game, who knows the building, who knows everything as well as Adam choose us for this event.

**Q. Steve, how does it feel knowing that you have helped to make the city of Inglewood the sports capital of the world?**

STEVE BALLMER: I didn't know much at all about Inglewood when we started this project; I'll be honest. I knew Paul Pierce was from here because I kind of track that kind of stuff. But I didn't really know much about Inglewood.

I do now. I'm not an expert, but I know a little bit. Mayor has taught me, other people in the area. We have a big focus on employing people from the local area. Not just Inglewood; it includes zip codes in Los Angeles, as well. We put effort into that.

We get to contribute to the community. We've put together a significant benefits package, investments in affordable housing as well as services to seniors and children and others well-guided by Mayor Butts. We have two courts that we can open up to the Inglewood community and host games in our plaza, and we have a special fan court, if you will, and we can cordon it off and let parents bring their kids in on the weekend and host basketball games.

I've grown to know the city a little bit, and we are just excited to be able to get people to invest back and do what we can do for this great city.

Anything you want to add, Mayor?

JAMES T. BUTTS JR.: I just want to tell you, you're part of changing the unemployment rate from 17 and a half percent when I took office with a local hire down to less than 5 percent. You're part of raising the median income of the city of Inglewood, and you're part of what has tripled property values in the city of Inglewood.

This has been a mutual beneficial team effort, and we appreciate that in you, and you have given the largest community benefits package of any professional sports team to any city in the history of the world, \$100 million.

KAREN BASS: I want to add to that because you're talking about Inglewood, but Steve Ballmer's philanthropy outside Inglewood in the Los Angeles area, the investment in

youth, and especially youth who could wind up in violence or on the wrong track has been phenomenal.

I know one specific example during COVID when restaurants were facing closure, what he did was provided resources so the restaurants would provide meals free to seniors. It kept the restaurants open. It kept the seniors fed.

THE MODERATOR: Before we go, I want to thank all of you for joining us, being here for an exciting day and an historic day, but we also want the photo op.

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