

**CALL FOR PAPERS—2018 AALS Annual Meeting
January 3-6, 2018 in San Diego, California**

**“Legal Implications of Social and Political Activism in Sports”
AALS Section on Law and Sports
Co-sponsored by the AALS Section on Contracts**

When QB Colin Kaepernick knelt during the national anthem at NFL games during the 2016 football season, he quickly became a symbol of a renewed era of athlete activism, triggering collegiate and professional athlete activists across the country to join demonstrations and sparking national conversations about racism and police brutality. But athlete activism is much broader, extending to philanthropic work such as NFL wide receiver Brandon Marshall’s efforts to spread mental health awareness and LeBron James’ funding of college scholarships for inner-city youth. Professional athletes’ willingness to take public stands on political and social issues is reflected and reinforced by sports entities’ social responsibility initiatives. For example, the NCAA relocated men’s basketball championship games out of North Carolina in response to a state law that curbed anti-discrimination protections for transgender people. Most sports leagues and governing bodies regularly participate in socially responsible causes.

In short, the sports industry has adopted the tenets of corporate social responsibility to fit its uniquely visible profile and serve its communities. Consequently, a constant stream of information can be found in news reports that showcase league, team and player efforts to make sports healthier and safer at all levels, improve literacy, create and fill jobs, address gender and racial inequalities, fight disease and poverty, prevent substantive abuse, address domestic violence, and clean up the environment. However, in staking out positions on political, social, and health questions, sports industry participants face legal ramifications and risk.

This program examines both public and private law issues that arise whenever individuals and organizations among the complex network of relationships that define the sports industry try to make socially responsible choices or engage in social or political activism. For example, public expression from professional athletes may be circumscribed by their collective bargaining agreements and league/team personal conduct codes. Morality clauses in endorsement contracts may be triggered by an athlete’s statements or actions. The ability of leagues to implement their social responsibility programs is heavily affected by the buy-in of their constituent teams. Athletes and other sports entities may require reverse morality clauses to ensure their rights to disassociate from corporate relationships when company conduct leads to public opprobrium. First Amendment considerations must be reconciled with contractual obligations.

The program will include a speaker selected from this Call for Papers. The selected author will participate in the Section’s annual program on Thursday, January 4, 2017 from 10:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m. in San Diego, California. Only full-time faculty from AALS member institutions are eligible to submit papers. Authors must rely on their own institutions for funding to attend the conference.

The Journal of Legal Aspects of Sports will consider proposals submitted in response to this Call for Papers for inclusion in a Special Issue on Athlete Activism and Sports Industry Social Responsibility scheduled for publication in August 2018 and guest edited by Professors Arthur Miller (NYU Law) and Jodi Balsam (Brooklyn Law).

The deadline to submit a draft paper or abstract is Monday, August 21, 2017. Please e-mail your submission to Professor Ettie Ward, Chair of the Section on Law and Sports, at warde@stjohns.edu. Members of the Section's Executive Committee will review submissions and communicate decisions by late September 2017.