

# Sports Lawyers Association to Present its Award of Excellence to Big East Commissioner Val Akerman

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AUSTIN, TX, UNITED STATES, April 25, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Sports Lawyers Association](#) (SLA) has announced that Big East Commissioner Val Ackerman will receive its Michael Weiner Award of Excellence, the highest honor bestowed by the association, on May 10 during its 49th Annual Conference in Baltimore.

For details on the conference and attending the event, [click here](#).

"It is in keeping with the SLA's long history of cultivating and recognizing trailblazing leaders in the sports industry that we recognize the lasting impact of Val's magnificent career in the sports industry," said Layth Gafoor, SLA President. "As a long-time member of this association, I can speak, personally and at length, about the tremendous foundation and standard of excellence that our female leaders have set in the proud history of this association."

Ackerman was named the fifth Commissioner of the Big East Conference on June 26, 2013. She was the founding President of the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) and is a past President of USA Basketball, which oversees the U.S. men's and women's Olympic basketball program. She has had a long and accomplished career in the sports industry and is one of the few executives in sports who has held leadership positions in both men's and women's sports at the collegiate, professional, national team and international levels.

She is an inductee of the Naismith Memorial Basketball of Fame (2021), the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame (2011) and the New Jersey Hall of Fame (2021). In 2016, Val received the Women's



Val Akerman

Sports Foundation's Billie Jean King Contribution Award for significant contributions to the development and advancement of women's sports.

The significance of the latest recognition was not lost on Akerman.

"I'm very honored to receive this recognition and commend the Sports Lawyers Association for the services it provides to the many current and former lawyers who populate the sports industry," said Akerman. "I had the privilege of working for three uber-talented lawyers in my early years at the NBA – David Stern, Russ Granik and Gary Bettman – and to this day I'm profoundly grateful for the know-how and problem-solving approach that they, my legal education at UCLA and



Layth Gafoor, SLA President

my two years of practice at Simpson Thacher & Bartlett instilled in me. As the law touches so many parts of the sports industry, I know that lawyers and the SLA will continue to play an active and important role in shaping the future of our space."

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*Layth Gafoor, SLA President*

After earning a law degree from UCLA in 1985, Akerman's legal career began as a corporate and banking associate at the aforementioned Simpson Thacher & Bartlett, Shortly thereafter, she joined the National Basketball Association as a staff attorney in 1988. Akerman was as an executive at the NBA for eight years, serving as Special Assistant to NBA Commissioner David Stern and Director (and later) Vice President of Business Affairs before being named the WNBA's first President in 1996. She guided the league to a much-heralded launch in 1997 and headed its day-to-day

operations for its first eight seasons.

For more on her storied career, [visit here](#).

SLA is a non-profit, international, professional organization whose common goal is the understanding, advancement and ethical practice of sports law.

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