

Ohio Athletic Commission
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State of Ohio
OHIO ATHLETIC COMMISSION

Chairman Carfagna and members of the Finance Subcommittee, my name is Bernie Profato, I am the Executive Director for the Ohio Athletic Commission and have held this position since September 2004. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Ohio Athletic Commission, Chairman Mr. Robert Schuerger and commission members: Mr. John Patton, Mr. Jon Stainbrook, Dr. James Armile and Mr. Raymond Mancino. I would like to thank the members of the Ohio Athletic Commission for their dedicated efforts in regulating the safety and well-being for those contestants competing in unarmed combat sports in the state of Ohio. I wish to also acknowledge the tremendous support received from Governor DeWine's staff, the legislators, the Office of Budget and Management, the Department of Administrative Services and other state agencies such as Legislative Services Commission, Attorney General's office and Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review.

Mission/Purpose

The Ohio Athletic Commission is responsible to oversee the regulation of unarmed combat sports in the State of Ohio. These sports include professional boxing, mixed martial arts, karate, kickboxing, tough person contests, other new developing forms of martial arts and to a limited degree professional wrestling.

The primary mission of the commission is to ensure that whenever athletes compete in Ohio, their safety and well-being is the number one priority, to minimize any risk of serious injury or death. All unarmed combat sports are regulated to ensure that all rules and regulations are followed. All officials are trained and updated when any new changes may occur. These officials include all inspectors, referees and judges and to some extent all the ringside physicians. Updated information received from the American Ringside Physicians Association, is passed onto the physicians assigned by the commission to work these events.

All new officials must go through a trial period prior to them being issued a license. The commission licenses all contestants, all non-officials, which includes managers, trainers, and seconds. We also ensure that there is proper licensed medical staff in attendance at all sanctioned events including ambulatory services. Also, an established policy of the commission insures that all contestants be examined by the attending ringside physician prior to and after they compete.

Challenges

- The unarmed combat sports regulated by the Athletic Commission are continually evolving into different event formats and the commission is challenged to keep current with these formats to ensure that there is adequate regulation for these sports. Must be able to identify and interpret the various techniques used in these sports.
- All participants must be licensed. These licenses must be recorded in a local and national database. The actual license is then transferred onto a hard license card and then the licenses are mailed to the licensee within a limited time span. All licenses including National ID's for mixed martial arts contestants and Federal ID's for all professional boxing contestants are usually sent out within five to seven days.

SERVICES

- The commission assigns all officials to these events, these include inspectors, physicians, referees, judges and timekeepers. This requires a phone call confirmation for each official assigned to work for each event. A finalized list of officials' names and assignments is posted on the OAC website permitting officials to check for the time and location of their assignments.
- Reviewing every scheduled bout for all boxing and mixed martial arts events to determine if the contestants are evenly and matched, according to skill level, experience and weight class to produce a fair and sportsmanlike contest.
- Make sure that all required pre-fight medicals are turned in 4 days prior to the bout. If they're not, the bout is cancelled for safety reasons.
- The total number of events have decreased as Ohio took a leadership role to placing the safety of fighters as a top priority in Mixed Martial Arts. Ohio was one of the first states to establish rules and regulations for amateur mixed martial arts and chose to work with all the states that border Ohio in helping them set up their Mixed Martial Arts program. By accomplishing this it also reduced the number of events in Ohio as these states and the participants were now able to compete in their own state. This also reduced the total revenue coming into the Athletic Commission budget.

Accomplishments

- One of the major accomplishments was the discovery of false blood work exams being submitted to the Commission. The results of a seven-month investigation, resulted in the indefinite suspension of a promoter, matchmaker and twenty-eight mixed martial arts fighters.

- Hosted several world title fights which brought additional revenue for the state and local economy
- Remains one of the leading commissions in the country for the directions taken to improve the quality of unarmed combat sports.

Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Budget

We had submitted to Office of Budget Management to change the language for the five percent tax paid by the promoters on the ticket sales to a seven percent fee for the services provided. This has been the same amount since 2000. We also provide a service that's why the word tax should be changed to fee. Approval of the requested 2020-2021 budget will allow the Ohio Athletic Commission to continue to oversee the operations of unarmed combat sports in the State of Ohio.

Thank you

Bernie Profato
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