

Ohio Athletic Commission
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State of Ohio
OHIO ATHLETIC COMMISSION

Chairperson Senator Gavorone members of the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee. My name is Bernie Profato, I am the Executive Director for the Ohio Athletic Commission and have held this position since 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 Management, especially Sharon Hanrahan and 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 ensures that all contestants and referees 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.
- COVID – We have worked on a plan that will allow events to occur under the guidance of the state and County Health Departments.
 - (1) Promoters will go to our website (aco.ohio.gov) and must read the requirements for hosting an event
 - (2) The next step is to complete a form that must be submitted to the state or county health boards that states what they will be doing for COVID protection at their event. Attendance, social distancing, entrances, dressing rooms, masks, and any other issue they may introduce. If the health commission approves their plan, they submit the form with the permit for the event. (Form enclosed)
 - (3) Anyone participating in the event will have their temperature taken and anyone registering over 100.0 degrees F, will not be permitted to participate. Those under 100.0 degrees F will be given a wrist band to indicate they are okay to participate. All officials and anyone at ringside or cage side must always wear a mask, with the exception of the fighters and referees when in the ring or cage.
 - (4). All participants are notified at the event if they show any signs of COVID or test positive for COVID after the event to notify the Promoter

immediately.

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 are 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

- Host world title fights in both Mixed Martial Arts and boxing which brought additional revenue for the state and local economy. This past year (2020) UFC world title fight that was supposed to be held in Columbus in March was unfortunately cancelled due to COVID. This was a revenue loss of approximately \$75,000.
- Ohio Commission remains one of the leading commissions in the country for the directions taken to improve the quality of unarmed combat sports.

Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Budget

We have worked with OBM to submit a budget so that the Commission can continue to provide the services and protection for those regulated by the Commission passing 2022-2023 budget proposals will allow the Ohio Athletic Commission to continue to oversee the operations of unarmed combat sports in the State of Ohio.

Thank you

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