

US House of Representatives – Committee on Energy & Commerce

10:30am, Rayburn Office Building

Testimony from Lydia Robertson, Treasurer of the Association of Boxing Commissions

A group of dedicated state officials began gathering together in the late 80's with the intent of improving boxing. Shortly, the Muhammad Ali Boxing Safety Act was passed, and the organization began attracting State Commissioners from around the country as members. As the Ali Act was enhanced and clarified, tribal governments, not just state commissions, began to join and here, 28 years later, the ABC has roughly 75 members from US Boards and another 70 from countries outside US Borders.

The ABC is a 501 (C) (3), non-profit and maintains a website (www.abcboxing.com) and offers continual training courses to enhance uniformity and skill among professional boxing referees and judges. Roughly 8 years ago, the ABC began working on Uniform Standard Safety Rules, just had been done for boxing, and they were updated this past summer in 2016. This organization receives no funds from the Federal Government, but exists on the dues collected from State and Tribal Commissions and from registration at an annual educational and training symposium.

The ABC has NO employees nor “contract help” other than attorneys or other such professions needed to complete a particular project. I am here on my own time, and ABC President, Mike Mazzulli, had hoped he could be here and you should a brief statement on file from him.

The ABC's interest is ALWAYS focused on fighter health and safety. How do we protect fighters, sometimes from themselves, and yet still allow the mixed martial arts to be a competition? What medical minimum standards should be in place? Our interest is ALWAYS on the fighter, fair treatment of the athletes, and their future. I can assure you, that without these brave souls, this meeting wouldn't even be held. And conversely, without the promoters putting on the shows, there would still not be an industry.

The Association of Boxing Commissions expanded their name this past summer to “Association of Boxing Commissions, Combative Sports” as clearly, the ABC is ready and willing to accept more responsibility if the Ali Act, or if some other new bill directed at safety and benefit to the fighters, passes. The ABC, among its many members possess unique and valuable perspectives: I was a promoter for years, one of our Board members was a fighter at one point, and other State Commissioner trained fighters. The five- member Board has almost 90 years experience just between us.

Unlike some laws with good intentions, the Muhammad Ali Act has greatly contributed to competition standards in title fights, altered the way contracts are entered into between managers, promoters, and athletes. The simple fact is, if a bill will reduce mma fighter exploitation, enhance fighter safety and is something the fighters are ready for, the ABC will probably support the bill. The ABC does not concern itself with promoters and their needs and regardless of whether they are a multi-billion dollar promoter or a small one found in the State of Alabama; it is the fighters with whom the ABC is most concerned. And in closing, I would like to remind everyone that the small, local promoter will also be required to adhere to the changes in the law. The ABC’s goal is uniform enforcement of protections.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today before the Committee on Energy and Commerce.