

State of Ohio  
**OHIO ATHLETIC COMMISSION**

**SENATE BIENNIUM**  
**BUDGET TESTIMONY**  
**HB 153**

**May 4, 2011**

**FISCAL YEARS**  
**2012 & 2011**

Presented to: Finance Committee  
Chairman: Senator – Chris Widener

Statehouse Room - 126

Honorable John R. Kasich  
Governor

Provided by:  
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Chairman Widener 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 would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Ohio Athletic Commission, Chairman Mr. Gene Weiss and commission members: Mr John Konstantinos, Mr. Tim Ochsenhirt, and Dr. Harry Stiggers. I would like to thank the members of the Ohio Athletic Commission and especially, Senator Tom Patton a non-voting member of the commission, for their dedicated efforts in regulating the safety and well being for those contestants competing in combat sports in the state of Ohio. I wish to also acknowledge the tremendous support received from the Governor Kasich's staff, the Legislators, the Office of Budget and Management the Department of Administrative Services and other state agencies such as LSC and JCARR.

**Mission / Purpose :**

The Ohio Athletic Commission is responsible to oversee the regulation of combat sports in the State of Ohio. These sports include professional boxing; mixed martial arts, karate, kick boxing, 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, so as to minimize any risk of serious injury or death. All combat sports are regulated to ensure that all rules and regulations are followed. All officials are trained and constantly updated on any new changes: These officials include all inspectors, referees and judges and to some extent the all 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 any license. The commission checks the records and backgrounds of all contestants competing in these events and licenses all contestants, all non-officials, which includes managers, trainers and seconds and all officials. We ensure that there is proper licensed medical staff in attendance at all sanctioned events including ambulatory services. Also an established policy insures that all contestants must be examined by the attending ringside physician prior to and after they compete.

## **Challenges :**

- The 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. Have to be able to identify and interpret the various techniques used in these sports.
- With the increasing number of events, the challenge of not only licensing all participants, but getting their license recorded in a database, creating the actual license and getting the license 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.
- 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 fairly matched, according to skill level, experience, and weight class so as to produce a fair and sportsmanlike contest.

## **Accomplishments:**

- The Associations of Boxing Commissions which is the overseeing body for combat sports in the United States instituted the National ID process for all Mixed Martial Arts contestants. The purpose of this National ID, which was instituted in August of 2008 and with Ohio issuing over 4200 of the 20,000 plus issued is to:
  - 1). Identify the contestant with a permanent lifetime identification number
  - 2). Identify any fighter that is suspended (name comes up in yellow)
  - 3). Creates more accurate records so that contestants can be matched competitively.
- Eliminated the bond for wrestling promoters which increased the number of permits and reduced the number of illegal events that had been occurring.
- Established regulations for professional wrestling.
- Included additional information on the website: (1). Results from all events; (2). Administrative Code and Commission minutes from all meetings (3). A Promoter's responsibility list is posted, so a promoter or those wishing to promote events understand what is required for them to promote an event in Ohio. (4). All forms used by the commission may be downloaded from the website. (5). All licensed boxers and mixed martial arts fighters names are listed on the database; this permits immediate information to a promoter by knowing if the contestant is currently licensed. A contestant that is currently licensed would not be required to produce medicals. (6). All current licensed Athlete Agents are listed, so that a student or educational institution may check the website to assure that the agent is currently licensed.

- **Counterfeit license:**
  - Fighters using the Federal ID's of another fighter. The fighters and their trainers were fined and suspended indefinitely.
- **Medicals:**
  - Forging test results, forging Dr's signature, changing pages with other fighters medical forms.
  - False & counterfeit medical clearances
  - We have found a number of fighters that have tested positive for blood disorders such as HIV and hepatitis C.
  - We have found fighters with Neurological damage from the test results from Cat Scan and MRI/MRA tests)
  - Using an incorrect DOB to avoid the additional medicals that are required for contestants over 35 and 39 years of age
  - Discovered forged medical and death insurance policy required by the promoter for the protection of fighters that compete in these events
  - Continued education for avoiding Staph infections
- **Drug testing:**
  - Random testing for controlled substances and performance enhancement drugs
  - Fighters that fail a drug test are fined, suspended and have to pass a drug screening prior to suspension being removed.

### **Fiscal Year 2012-2013 Budget**

It should be noted that prior to 2005 the Athletic Commission failed to raise sufficient revenues to cover operating expenses. By vastly increasing the number of licenses and fight events, including major promoter events, I am pleased to report that since then revenues have exceeded expenses making the commission self funded which does not draw upon the critical resources of the State.

Approval of the requested 2012-2013 budget will allow the Ohio Athletic Commission to continue to oversee the operations of combat sports in the State of Ohio. Nevertheless, during the biennium, the Ohio Athletic Commission will seek methods to enhance the revenue stream, possibly increasing license fees in 2013. With the adoption of casinos, this may open the opportunity to entice major Mixed Martial Arts and Boxing promoters to continue to come to Ohio to conduct major championship events.

I appreciate your attention today and will now be pleased to answer any questions that you may have.



Filing Cabinets for Ohio Athletic Commission.

Quotes referencing the Ohio Athletic Commission:

1. Mr. Tim Luekenoff, president of the Association of Boxing Commissions (ABC): “Those commissions attempting to establish Amateur Mixed Martial Arts rules should contact the Ohio Commission, All commissions should be doing it like Ohio.”
2. Dr. John Benjamin, article he wrote in MMA Junkie newsletter: “Thiago Alves is a blessed man for having the good fortune of being slated to compete in New Jersey, which happens to have one of the best if not the best, SAC’s. Their due diligence may have saved Alves’ life. New Jersey, Ohio and Nevada have the best SAC’s from a fighter-safety perspective, in the US. **No disrespect intended to any other SAC, but this is how the best of the best protect athletes.**”
3. Mr. Bill Bouffard, Maine Athletic Commission: “I am sending this memo to thank you for sending us your rules, forms and licensing procedures. We have modeled our commission after Ohio’s and they are now on their way to our Secretary of State.”
4. Mr. Jared Rogers head database technician for the Mixed Martial Arts database and National ID’s, gave this analysis of Ohio: “Even with the amount of event that go through

Ohio you are still able to run the most efficient and accurate Athletic Commission I have ever worked with.

5. Mr. Brock Robinson from Toronto, Ontario writes: I want to express my admiration for the work that you and your commission have done to further combat sports around the world. I would appreciate any advice you can give us to help us better our program
6. Ken Pishwa, MMA Weekly: Thank you for the quick response on the drug test results from the WEC 47 event in Columbus. Just another reason why everybody is singing the praises of your commission.
7. Submitted and read on the House Floor by former Rep. John Otterman: "Please read the attached article featured in mmajunkie.com on April 1, 2010 regarding the elite status of Ohio in regulating Mixed Martial Arts (MMA). Ohio is often featured in articles and publications dedicated to the up and coming sport of mixed martial arts for our outstanding administration and regulation of this rapidly growing sport."
8. Andrew Williams manager for WBO World Junior Lightweight Champion Adrian Broner from Cincinnati: Williams credits the high standards of the Ohio commission who asks fighters to take on quality opponents rather than the bum of the week club. "We have to give kudo's to the state of Ohio, this state is tough and it's made us a lot tougher."