

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6103

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Commerce & Trade, February 6, 2004

Title: An act relating to making certain types of extreme fighting illegal.

Brief Description: Making certain types of extreme fighting illegal.

Sponsors: Senators Zarelli, Keiser, Rasmussen, Regala, Franklin, Kline, Deccio, Jacobsen and Fairley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Commerce & Trade: 1/21/04, 2/6/04 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & TRADE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6103 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Honeyford, Chair; Hewitt, Vice Chair; Franklin, Keiser and Mulliken.

Staff: John Dziedzic (786-7784)

Background: Professional boxing, kickboxing, martial arts, and wrestling matches are regulated by the Department of Licensing (DOL). Participants and promoters of such events must be licensed and the event must be conducted in accordance with rules adopted by DOL. Such events that "are entirely amateur events promoted on a nonprofit basis," or are conducted by schools, colleges or universities are not subject to licensing and regulation by DOL.

Summary of Substitute Bill: An "amateur event" is defined as one in which "all the participants are amateurs" and is sanctioned by specified entities, such as the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association, the NCAA, Golden Gloves, etc., or similar organizations. The definition of "amateur" is amended to include only persons who have never competed for or received more than \$50 in an athletic event.

Definitions of "boxing," "kickboxing" and "martial arts" are amended to exclude activities where the intent is to injure or disable an opponent.

Certain forms of fighting ("no holds barred-," "frontier-," or "extreme-" fighting) are defined as having the purpose of intentionally injuring a contestant and are prohibited. Other forms of fighting, which allow the participation of contestants who are not trained in the sport ("combative-," "toughman-," "toughwoman-" and "badman-" fighting), are defined and prohibited. "Elimination tournaments" are also defined and prohibited.

The promotion of any form of fighting prohibited by the statute is a class C felony.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The penalty for violating the bill is made a class C felony. Other organizations recognized by the Department of Licensing are eligible to sponsor amateur events.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: Regulation of this activity is justified because of the undue influence of the promoter over what otherwise could be viewed as an issue of freedom of choice. Whether this commercial enterprise fits within the letter or spirit of "nonprofit" is questionable. Despite promoters' claims, many licensed boxing officials now decline to referee bouts due to the lack of professional standards, disregard of participant's safety by promoters that countermand judgment calls of when to stop fights, etc. Such events are legalized brawls that promote bullying, denigrate professional and true amateur boxing as a sport, cause serious injury and death, and should be stopped.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Senator Joseph Zarelli, prime sponsor; Senator Karen Keiser, co-sponsor; Barry Druxman, Robert E. Howard, Jeff Macaluso, International Professional Ring Officials; Curtis Leach, IPRO & Assn. of Boxing Commissioners; Mark E. Jacobsen, IPRO & USA Boxing; Dr. Fred Griesman; Gordon Sondker; Brian Halquist; Dr. Antoine D. Johnson; Trudie Touchette, Randy Renfrow, Department of Licensing.