

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2388

As Reported by House Committee On:
Business & Financial Services
General Government & Information Technology

Title: An act relating to theatrical wrestling.

Brief Description: Concerning theatrical wrestling.

Sponsors: Representatives Hudgins, MacEwen, Stanford, Rossetti and Bergquist.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Business & Financial Services: 1/20/16, 1/26/16 [DP];

General Government & Information Technology: 2/2/16, 2/5/16 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a theatrical wrestling school license.
- Permits theatrical wrestling schools to put on a limited number of public performances of theatrical wrestling.
- Exempts from licensure trainees at a theatrical wrestling school.
- Permits wrestling promoters to keep an emergency medical technician at events rather than an ambulance and other medical personnel.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS & FINANCIAL SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Kirby, Chair; Stanford, Vice Chair; Vick, Ranking Minority Member; McCabe, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Blake, Dye, Hurst, Kochmar, Ryu, Santos and G. Hunt.

Staff: David Rubenstein (786-7153).

Background:

The Department of Licensing (Department) regulates boxing, martial arts, kickboxing, and wrestling events. Wrestling events are defined by statute to mean "a form of sports

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entertainment in which the participants display their skills in a physical struggle against each other in the ring and either the outcome may be predetermined or the participants do not necessarily strive to win, or both."

Licensure.

Wrestlers, boxers, martial arts participants, promoters, and others involved with the events must obtain a license from the Department unless exempt. The Department currently requires that wrestling event promoters pay a fee equal to 6 percent of the gross receipts for any event held under the promoter license and a separate license fee is assessed to participants and promoters.

Events held at a school, college, or university in which all participants are students are exempt from regulation, as are entirely amateur events.

Medical Personnel Requirement.

The promoter of a wrestling, boxing, or martial arts event must have an ambulance or paramedical unit on site at the event at the promoter's expense. The Department may, at its discretion, require the presence of a physician at a wrestling event and may require the medical examination of a participant.

Summary of Bill:

Licensure.

A new theatrical wrestling school license is created. Licensees may hold a limited number of public events per year (to be determined by the Department), which must feature at least 80 percent amateur participants. Wrestling participants engaged in training or a show at a theatrical wrestling school are exempt from licensure. The Department has rulemaking authority to implement the license.

Medical Personnel Requirement.

Wrestling show promoters may satisfy the ambulance or paramedical unit requirement by having a licensed emergency medical technician on site at the event.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 11, 2016.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Independent wrestling and *lucha libre* promoters are struggling to put on shows in many Washington communities. These events are regulated like boxing and mixed martial arts, but they are fundamentally different. Whereas in those combative sports, the goal of each participant is to win by hurting the other, in theatrical wrestling the goal is to keep every participant safe and unharmed while entertaining the crowd. Wrestling is more like ballet and gymnastics than like boxing or mixed martial arts. Training always focuses on safety first and foremost, especially protecting the performers' heads.

The advocates of this bill have been working with the Department for two years and are pleased to have its support. Similar wrestling events exist successfully in other states without any regulation at all, but this bill will help small independent promoters get a start here in Washington. Students of the art will also have an advantage in having the opportunity to get on-the-job training before participating in public shows. The reduced medical personnel requirement will reduce costs for independent promoters.

Lucha libre is a part of Latino culture, especially in Mexico. Whereas *lucha libre* has been uncommon in Seattle until recently, this bill helps Latinos living in Washington practice their culture and their passion.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Hudgins, prime sponsor; Jake Stratton, Legalize Wrestling; Jose Gomez, Lucha Libre Volcanica; Russell Tupper-Brown, 3-2-1 Battle; and Bill Pease.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Hudgins, Chair; Kuderer, Vice Chair; MacEwen, Ranking Minority Member; Caldier, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Morris and Senn.

Staff: Lily Sobolik (786-7157).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On General Government & Information Technology Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Business & Financial Services:

No new changes were recommended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Existing regulation is cost prohibitive to this specific community. This bill would right-size the regulation for this area. Community stakeholders and the Department of Licensing have been working together to negotiate the right regulations for this activity.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Hudgins, prime sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.