

HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
REPRESENTATIVE LAWRENCE KLEMIN, CHAIRMAN

TESTIMONY PRESENTED BY
MICHAEL HOWE, SECRETARY OF STATE

Chairman Klemin and members of the committee, I am Michael Howe, Secretary of State. Our office is here to provide neutral testimony for HB 1525 while providing insights into the Combative Sports Commission and the functions our office currently holds in this area. This bill would shift the responsibilities and oversight of combative sports, such as boxing and mixed martial arts, to the Gaming Commission.

We wanted to advise the committee on the scope of resources used by our office to carry out this function in cooperation with the 9-member Combative Sports Commission. Our office plays a more hands-on role in coordination and regulation of fight events than you may expect.

Regulation and staffing of MMA/Boxing events requires planning, organization, and efficient execution to ensure a positive and memorable experience for fighters, spectators, and promoters.

- The secretary of state will regulate up to two events each month and it takes at least 5 Commissioners and 2 NDSOS to work an event.
- Events span 3 days, with the weigh-in, the bouts, and post event reporting.

We are responsible for **coordination of licensing with promoter, contestants, and licensees**. All the roles and functions in this area are outlined in administrative rules which match national standards for combative sports.

- **Types of Licenses** – There are approximately 75 participants at each event, depending on the number of bouts on a card, on average 10-14 bouts.
 - **Promoter** – responsible for the coordination of the event venue, matchmaker, contestants, non-contestant licensee and all communication with the NDSOS
 - **Contestant** – Boxer or fighter participating in contest or match
 - **Non-Contestant Licensee** – In addition to the promoter and contestant, each person that serves the role of Cornerperson/Second, Judge, Knockdown Counter, Manager, Matchmaker, Physician, Referee, or Timekeeper at the event must be licensed and have at least one year of verifiable experience and proficiency in either amateur or professional combative fight style competition.

- **NDSOS Staff** – Address general queries, manage records, and support preparation prior to the event and carrying out the administrative aspects at the event.
 - Two NDSOS staff members are at the weigh-in and event to carry out registration/payment of contestants, non-contestants, oversight of licensing and medical paperwork, payout of contracts, and issuing of suspension letters.
- **Combative Sports Director (1)** – a part time temporary employee that would be impacted by this shift. The Director is the lead commissioner assigned to collaborate with all parties in preparation for an event.
 - Responsible for directing events, procedures, and communication with Promoter, NDSOS Staff, and other Commission Members.
 - This individual is responsible for implementing national rules in accordance with the Association
- **Commission Member (8)** –These individuals assist and advise the director in the administration of events. Commissioners assist with inspecting the cage, distribution of gloves, checking compliance with rules, and managing the locker rooms before and during the event. Outside of the director, commission members are only compensated for their meals, and mileage; their time is donated.
 - 1 commissioner is needed to assist at weigh-in.
 - 4 commissioners are needed at the fight.

Combative sport events currently produce roughly \$15,000 in revenues and we would transfer any existing funds to the gaming commission at the conclusion of the biennium. The Office of the Secretary of State supplements this with approximately \$30,000-\$50,000 to support this function.

Again, we are happy to support and assist in any needed transition if this bill moves forward. I would stand for any questions.