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Committee on Education and Workforce

U.S. House of Representatives

2176 Rayburn House office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Request for Additional Responses on the Record

Dear Representatives Mackenzie and Scott:

I have been given "Questions for the Record from Representative Robert C. "Bobby" Scott In connection with the Workplace and Education Committee Hearing titled: "In Their Corner: Creating More Opportunities for American Boxers". I am more than happy to respond as follows:

1. Several witnesses referred to a decline in boxing, of which the termination of boxing programming on ESPN, HBO, and Showtime is supposed to be a particularly telling symptom.

a.) What do the industry data on boxing events and bouts suggest about the supposed demise of boxing?

I have obtained statistics from Boxrec which is the official record keeper for the Association of Boxing commissions. The following are numbers of events and fights in the United States for the past 10 years.

Year	Events	Bouts
2025	578	4011
2024	596	3926
2023	590	3864
2022	573	3733
2021	479	3348
2020	235	1613
2019	603	4083
2018	596	3766
2017	605	3884
2016	621	4060
2015	615	4099

It is my impression that 2026 has started out on a strong note, but it is really too early to tell.

The numbers speak for themselves and I note that the number of bouts rose last year to a post pandemic high.. That being said, when HBO and Showtime withdrew from televising boxing there is no doubt in my mind that this was a marketing blow to the industry as each devoted substantial resources to the marketing of boxing events.

However, in keeping with the telecast industry in general, much of that slack was picked up by streaming entities such as DAZN, Netflix, Amazon and others. Just Friday

YouTube announced a major new series I am directly aware of an additional major deal which is in negotiation. Of course, Zuffa Boxing has also just started a major broadcast deal with Paramount, not contingent on the passage of the amendments being sought. I am optimistic about the future of the sport in this regard.

b.) What can you tell us about the current state of boxing programming in the media and the revenue associated with such programming for boxers, promoters, and others in the boxing industry?

Boxing is a worldwide sport. There are entities which devote what most would consider huge resources to the sport (Riyhad Season being a notable example). United States boxers and some promoters participate in that windfall. Some PPV shows have garnered huge sums. However the number of streaming deals as set forth above bodes well. For the sport and for boxers.

In a sense boxing is a feast or famine sport. A relatively small number of boxers reach the pinnacle and earn very large sums, in the millions of dollars and sometimes in the tens of millions. There is a middle class which makes a handsome living. However many boxers toil for very low purses, and I support that aspect of the bill which calls for a minimum of one hundred and fifty dollars a round.

2.) What were some of the common practices in the boxing industry that the Ali Act was intended to address in order to protect the boxers? Please provide examples.

a) The bill does something that Senator McCain expressly disavowed. There had been a history of coziness between certain promoters and ratings organizations. For background on this read Jack Newfield's book, "Only in America: The Life and Crimes of Don King" and also read about the indictment and ultimate conviction of Bob Lee, then the IBF President. The Act was intended to create, among other things, a firewall between ratings organizations and Promoters. The proposed amendment destroys that firewall as to a selected entity which will be awarding in-house championships based upon ratings which excludes boxers not affiliated with that entity. This is a betrayal of the current act and of what McCain and those who worked with him were trying to accomplish. There is no justifiable reason for there to be different languages regarding the firewall between promoters and managers established by the Ali Act. It's not clear from parsing the differences in language what benefit could be gleaned, but the same firewall protections should apply to the Zuffa Entity's in its capacity as a promoter (again, under the notion here that the entity is both promoter and sanctioning body).

b.) There is a diminishment of Protections from Coercive Contracts in the proposed bill (Section 10 of the Ali Act). Note that Section 10(B) could not be applicable to a Zuffa Entity, but Section 10(A) could be as the bill is currently drafted. This really has to do with contracts coerced as a condition of fighting for a championship.

c.) There is an elimination of Required Disclosures for Promoters (Section 13 of the Ali Act). This includes both required disclosures to Boxing Commissions and required disclosures to the fighters so that they can negotiate contracts commensurate with their skill and the income which they generate.

d.) Rules applicable to sanctioning bodies that protect fighters are not applicable under the proposed amendment. For example:

The proposed Amendment eliminates any requirement to create “guidelines for objective and consistent written criteria for the ratings of professional boxers.” To explain Zuffa envisions creation of what is in essence an in-house ratings Board. There would be no requirement that the Zuffa controlled entity provide a “written explanation of the organization’s criteria, its rating of the boxer, and the rationale or basis for its rating” and no appeals process. These are required under the current Ali Act but would not be under the proposed amendment.

e.) The concept behind the Act is for Zuffa to be both a promoter and a sanctioning body. With regard to sanctioning bodies, while they may not properly follow the above, fighters have legal recourse if a sanctioning body is not complying with its rules and regulations regarding rankings/title fights. Under the proposed Amendment, the idea is for a Zuffa Controlled entity to operate as both a promoter AND a sanctioning body, they should be subject to the requirements for both as set forth in the Ali Act. In this regard I note that Zuffa takes the position that because it does not charge the boxer fees it is not a sanctioning body. The issue of the charging of fees is a separate issue as under the Ali Act if an entity ranks fighters and awards titles (sanctions bouts for titles) it is indeed a sanctioning body.

f.) Under the Muhammad Ali Act Fighters have access to the Federal Courts for an alleged violation. The Zuffa contracts seek to limit any claims to arbitration before an entity called JAMS. JAMS rules provide for confidentiality, meaning claims by a boxer would remain unknown by other boxers, who may be in the same boat. The Ali Act expressly grants access to the Federal and State Courts for violations which affect his/her rights and which cause injury. This right is a crucial means for boxers to enforce their rights but is eliminated under the proposed amendment.

g.) The reporting of drug violations (PED’s) is dangerously weakened under the proposed amendment. Under the current system test results are reported to the Promoter and the local Commission and the ABC and the opponent. In the current bill results go to the promoter or the local commission or the ABC. The difference between the word “or” in the proposed amendment and the word “and” in the current Act has huge consequences. Under the proposed amendment. Legal responsibilities would be fulfilled if only the Promoter got the results. The potential for the hiding of results is obvious. What is more the in-house person for drug testing for the UFC has left and started his own testing firm with one client to date – Zuffa. The lack of independence is clear.

3.) To what extent, if any, do the contract terms and practices in the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) parallel the practices described in your answer to (2)?

As I noted in response to the prior question, Zuffa is, quite literally, taking a page out of Don King’s playbook, something the Muhammad Ali Act was designed in part to block¹. Don King attempted create a preference for his own fighters by corrupting the ratings organizations. One of the Main purposed of the Ali Act was to provide a firewall between promoters and a sanctioning body. Under the proposed legislation Zuffa is permitted to actually become a sanctioning body, issuing titles and ratings. It creates the opportunity for a closed system.

It was John McCain’s goal, admittedly not completely realized, that the rankings be fair, that the best fighters have an opportunity to fight for the titles without selling themselves into bondage to a given promoter. If the amendment passes this protection in the Ali Act is eliminated.²

4.) If H.R. 4624 were enacted into law in its current form, and if the current owners of UFC launch a Unified Boxing Organization under the law, to what extent, if any, would they be allowed to replicate the practices described in (3) in boxing?

In my original testimony on the proposed amendment, I wrote:

“When John McCain and his staff drafted the [Boxer Health and Safety and Muhammad Ali] Acts there was no agenda but one. That agenda was to make boxing better, safer, and more fair to boxers. There was no intent at all to favor any single promotional entity.”

That is not the case here. The clear intent is to favor a single promotional entity. The bill was substantially drafted by lobbyists for that entity, to wit Zuffa and its various subdivisions. The whole purpose was to create a bill under which Zuffa could replicate the MMA model of the UFC. They would be able to replicate all of the ills I set forth in responses 2 and 3. The Committee should not, I submit, simply ignore the fact that Zuffa was sued in anti trust by its athletes and was forced to pay some \$375,000,000 to settle after a series of adverse rulings by the Judge hearing the case.³ Since it is clear that Zuffa intends t try to replicate the UFC there is no reason at all to believe that the anti trust practices would not continue.

¹ I have heard Don King himself refer to the Muhammad Ali Act as the “Anti Don King Act”. In point of fact the Act attempts to regulate many practices, not all of which were practiced by Don King. But some were.

² At the time the Muhammad Ali Act was passed John McCain detested what was then the fledgling sport of MMA. He did not want to add legitimacy to it. That is why the Ali Act did not cover it. He later changed his views.

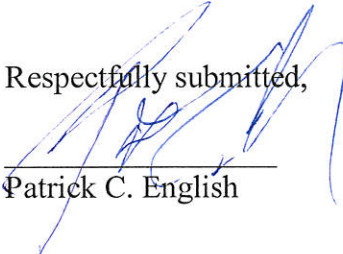
³ A portion of that case remains ongoing.

I bear no ill will toward Zuffa. They should be welcomed into the ranks of promoters. But they should not be exempted from the requirements of the Ali Act designed to protect boxers. That is what this proposed amendment does.

I would like to take the liberty of going a step further. Since the hearing I have been asked how the Muhammad Ali Act can be improved. In conjunction with a prominent ringside physician, I have suggested minimum health and safety standards applicable to all states and promoters. I have suggested that the requirements for fair and objective ratings be strengthened with a meaningful and cost-free appeals process. I have suggested a limitation on "interim champions". I believe that a promoter's ability to control the endorsement rights of a fighter should be prohibited. I agree with the proposal to have a minimum required payment per round. Finally, I believe in Senator McCain's vision of a National Boxing Commission.

I and others knowledgeable in the sport would be happy to work with the Committee on these proposals as well as others to advance the Sport of Boxing.

Respectfully submitted,


Patrick C. English