



COMMENTARY: UFC should be investigated, not granted new privileges

By Oscar de la Hoya Special to the Las Vegas Review-Journal

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This month, the sports world was rocked by explosive allegations against mixed martial arts giant UFC. As a Hall of Fame boxer, six-division and 11-time world champion and promoter with more than three decades in combat sports, I urge officials to launch immediate investigations — not grant new privileges.

According to allegations published by MMA journalist Harry Mac, the FBI warned the UFC that the Isaac Dulgarian-Yadier del Valle bout had been flagged and closed to betting by sportsbooks because of suspicious wagering patterns. Yet the organization reportedly allowed the fight to proceed. Mac also alleges that more than 100 other bouts — including fights from UFC Vegas 110 — were similarly flagged along with the work of one referee.

UFC CEO Dana White claims his organization is cooperating with the FBI.

These allegations threaten the integrity of combat sports themselves. They demand urgent scrutiny by Nevada Attorney General Aaron Ford, the Nevada Athletic Commission and every state that sanctions UFC events. Before Congress considers granting the UFC expanded authority over boxing, the nation's top law-enforcement and regulatory

agencies must determine whether its existing operations have respected the most basic standards of integrity and transparency.

The timing could not be more alarming. While federal investigators reportedly examine fight-fixing and betting manipulation, the UFC's parent company, TKO Group Holdings, is lobbying Congress to pass the Muhammad Ali American Boxing Revival Act. The name invokes reform. The substance undermines it. The bill would allow promoter-controlled "Unified Boxing Organizations" to own rankings, titles and fighters — essentially duplicating the UFC's single-entity model inside boxing. It would legalize the very conflicts of interest the original Ali Act was written to outlaw.

The Ali Act of 2000 was one of the few federal laws ever passed to protect athletes rather than corporations. It barred promoters from acting as managers, required disclosure of finances and empowered state commissions to act as independent referees for fairness and safety. The new legislation would gut that framework. Fighters would lose bargaining freedom, independent sanctioning bodies would be marginalized and the open marketplace that keeps the sport honest would collapse into monopoly.

Proponents point to a national minimum purse of \$150 per round as evidence of progress. But California already mandates \$200 per round, and most fighters spend more than that on travel, licensing and mandatory medical tests before they ever step into the ring. In practice, that “minimum” is a ceiling that gives promoters cover to pay less, not a floor that guarantees fairness.

The original Ali Act was fully in place during some of the most financially successful fights of my career — including multimillion-dollar events against Shane Mosley, Arturo Gatti, Fernando Vargas, Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Manny Pacquiao, to name a few. Thanks to the Ali Act, I knew exactly where every dollar was earned and spent, had the power to negotiate my own purses and could compete for all the sanctioned world titles. I can say with absolute confidence that I would not have achieved the same level of success without it.

Today, as a promoter, it’s my responsibility to ensure that every fighter under the Golden Boy banner enjoys those same protections, transparency and opportunities that helped define my career.

If Congress cares about cleaning up boxing, it should start by investigating the organization now under federal scrutiny —not by handing it control of another sport. The UFC’s financial model already leaves its athletes earning less than 20 percent of event revenue, a fraction of what athletes receive in football, basketball or baseball. Transplanting that system into boxing would turn an already fragile profession into indentured labor.

Nevada’s economy and reputation are tied to combat sports. The state’s gaming and

consumer-protection laws give Aaron Ford the power to open a full inquiry. The Nevada Athletic Commission should likewise halt automatic event approvals until it receives clear assurances that every flagged fight has been reviewed and cleared by the appropriate authorities.

Other states should follow Nevada’s lead. New York, Florida and California all host major UFC events and have the legal authority to investigate.

As for Congress, it must step back. Lawmakers should convene hearings with testimony from the FBI, the Justice Department and state regulators before even considering the Revival Act. To advance such legislation amid unresolved federal concerns would not only be reckless — it would be complicit.

Muhammad Ali fought for autonomy, dignity and the right to control his own career. To attach his name to a bill that would concentrate power in corporate hands is a moral inversion of everything he stood for. Boxing does not need to be “revived” by monopoly. It needs to be protected by law.

Las Vegas, the historic capital of boxing and my second home where I had some of the biggest fights, has both the jurisdiction and the moral responsibility to lead that protection. The state that built the fight game must now defend it. Anything less would betray the fighters who risk everything in the ring — and the public whose faith sustains the sport.

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