

## *Lawmakers and MMA Threaten Boxing*

A new bill claims to be an extension of the Muhammad Ali Act, but it's bad for fighters.

---

By Evander Holyfield

Nov. 2, 2025 4:03 pm ET

When I fought, I did my talking in the ring. Once the bell rang, it was all on me—my training, my choices, my courage. That's the way of boxing. You control your destiny.

Now I'm speaking out because lawmakers are trying to take that control away. A new bill called the *Muhammad Ali American Boxing Revival Act* would give boxing over to corporate bosses, burying fighters with lower standards and less pay.

Proponents call this an “expansion” of the original Muhammad Ali Act, which was passed in 2000. But this new bill is exactly what that original Ali Act was written to stop. When Ali's name went on the law back then, it meant something. It protected fighters from being owned by promoters. It gave fighters the right to see what bosses earned from their work. It required improved health and safety standards: medical exams, drug testing, ringside doctors, insurance. It gave boxing structure without taking away freedom.

This new bill, introduced by Reps. Brian Jack (R., Ga.) and Sharice Davids (D., Kan.), would create “Unified Boxing Organizations,” private leagues that can crown their own champions, run their own rankings, and promote fights exclusively among their own fighters. In other words, a company could control every part of the league.

The loudest voices pushing for this rewrite aren't boxers but the promoters of mixed martial arts, the people who made “business first, fighters last” a megasport. MMA fighters have spent years suing for fair pay, and the Ultimate Fighting Championship recently agreed to pay hundreds of millions to settle antitrust cases that

alleged the organization used its monopoly power to suppress fighter compensation. MMA fighters currently take home about 20% of the sport's revenue. Boxers? Roughly 80%. Flip that math, and you see the play: Fighters lose, promoters win.

Dana White, CEO and president of the UFC, says he plans to launch his own boxing brand, with his own belts, outside the traditional sanctioning bodies. Those running this new venture, a deal between TKO Group Holdings and Saudi entertainment company Sela, have been lobbying to make it possible—and this bill would give them everything they've been asking for.

Proponents say it will create national pay minimums and insurance rules. A \$150-a-round minimum sounds nice until you realize that is less than what California's state commission requires—and likely less than a fighter spends just getting to the ring. It gives promoters a ceiling to hide behind, not a floor to stand on. Meantime, the bill would gut the true protections: transparency rules, separation between promoters and sanctioning bodies, independent rankings that keep fights fair.

Even people who work in the business know that this bill isn't a reform. Oscar De La Hoya, a boxing promoter and former professional boxer, called the effort "shady." Another promoter, Eddie Hearn, discouraged the bill, saying, "I'm not interested in a fake belt. I'm not interested in changing the Muhammad Ali Act. I'm not interested in changing the shape of the ring or the rules. What I'm interested in is the greatness of the sport of boxing."

If Congress wants to help fighters, it should reject this bill. Instead, give MMA fighters the same protections boxers already have, so the UFC can't play by one set of rules in MMA while trying to rewrite them in boxing. Invest in funding gyms, medical programs and postcareer training. Help the next generation build safe, sustainable careers. Don't sell the sport to the highest bidder.

I've walked into the ring knowing nothing was guaranteed. I fought with every ounce I had. The original Muhammad Ali Act has helped keep me and other fighters safe and our careers sustainable. But this new bill is bad for boxing. Bad for fighters. Bad for fans. If you love this sport, as I do, don't let anybody take it out of the fighters' hands.

*Mr. Holyfield, a former heavyweight boxer, held multiple championship titles between 1990 and 2001.*