

December 3, 2025

PREAMBLE

Expand the Ali Act. Protect All Fighters.

The Ali Act was created to protect boxers— but it only applies to boxing. MMA fighters still face unchecked promoter power, while loopholes in the system weaken protections for everyone.

**\*Expanding the Ali Act helps all fighters—** \*by leveling the playing field, reinforcing boxer protections, and holding promoters accountable across the board.

This open letter is a united call from fighters, fans, and advocates. Read it. Sign it. Share it. Let's finish what the Ali Act started.

OPEN LETTER TO THE COMBAT SPORTS COMMUNITY  
AND MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

Together, we are writing to express our unwavering support for the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act (Ali Act) and urge passage of the Muhammad Ali Expansion Act (Ali Expansion Act), a proposed amendment that would extend the Ali Act's protections to all professional combat sports, including mixed martial arts (MMA).

The case for the Ali Expansion Act is compelling. Two congressional hearings have been held in support of the bill, which garnered 58 bipartisan co-sponsors—far more than the original Ali Act's 16. Of those 58, 32 were Republican and 26 were Democratic. That kind of bipartisan consensus is rare, but it came easily for a bill designed to curb monopoly power, prevent fighter exploitation, and eliminate the kinds of conflicts of interest that have long damaged combat sports and the public's trust in them.

The legislative history of the Muhammad Ali Act is instructive as to the intent of the Ali Act and the exploitive practices boxers endured before the late great Muhammad Ali lent his name to the bill designed to present these exploitive practices:

“Historically, promoters in the industry have required an exclusive longterm promotional contract with a boxing challenger as a condition precedent to permitting a bout against another boxer that the promoter has under contract. The Committee believes, and hearing witnesses and industry members strongly concur, that this tactic is the key contracting practice that has been used by promoters to gain undue control over boxers and championship titles, to the clear detriment of the sport. Promoters have used this practice to extract ‘exclusive promotional options’ from boxers who already have a promoter, and who would not otherwise enter into a contract with a new promoter. The athletes would be better served, as would open competition in the sport, if boxers were free to contract with those

promoters they personally choose, rather than being coerced to contract with a promoter who is in the position of barring a lucrative bout.”<sup>1</sup>

The legislative testimony on the business practices in boxing continued by stating:

“This practice of coercing options from boxers is also utilized by promoters and sanctioning organizations against ‘mandatory challengers’—those boxers who are rated by a sanctioning organization as the top contender in a weight division. The top-rated contender is supposed to be assured of having a bout against the champion of that division, within a specific period of time. Despite the fact that top-rated challengers have clearly earned the right to compete for a title, sanctioning organizations have abetted restrictive contracting practices by allowing promoters of championship bouts to require options from them. As one hearing witness noted, this is akin to forcing a professional tennis player or golfer to sign an exclusive, long term contract with the promoter of whatever event they were seeking to win. The athlete would then only be able to compete when the promoter approved, against only those opponents who also were forced to agree to terms with that promoter. In self-governed and well-organized sports industries such as tennis and golf, such a business practice would be strongly challenged as an unreasonable restraint of trade. In professional boxing, it is business as usual.”<sup>2</sup>

The legislative history continued by stating:

“This practice also has enabled a single promoter to gain control over a majority of championship bouts in a weight division because it results in one promoter having control over both the champion and the challenger. No matter which boxer wins a title bout, the promoter remains in control over who may compete for that title, since he has both contestants under exclusive contract. If a boxer who seeks to challenge a champion (or a more established boxer) refuses to provide long term contractual rights to the promoter, the boxer will be denied the right to compete in the bout. This practice frustrates the years of determined training and arduous competition that boxers endure, for they will be denied the opportunities that their successes in the ring have earned. No boxer will ever be able to compete for the title in that division unless they sign away future promotional rights to that promoter. The promoter thus has gained total control over an entire segment of a major professional sports industry. This contracting practice allows a promoter to achieve a monopoly on a substantial portion of championship-level competition in that particular weight division.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/106/crpt/srpt83/CRPT-106srpt83.pdf>, P. 8-9.

<sup>2</sup> Id.

<sup>3</sup> Id.

The Ali Act has been highly successful in accomplishing its three main goals: preventing monopoly, fighter exploitation, and conflicts of interest that harm both the boxer and viewing

public by stripping away the integrity of sport. The Ali Act was enacted to end this abuse—and it has worked.

Unfortunately, we write to the combat sports community today not only seeking support for the Ali Expansion Act amendment, which is desperately needed by all professional combat sports athletes, ***but also to protect the legacy of Muhammad Ali from attack by a promotion that seeks to strip the protections of the original Ali Act from boxers!*** Alarming, the very promoter that monopolized MMA—UFC, through its parent company TKO—is now lobbying to weaken the Ali Act’s protections for boxers.

In a recent antitrust case, U.S. District Judge Richard Bouleware found that UFC used coercive contracts to maintain monopoly power:

“In addition to the ways in which the provisions of the exclusionary contracts permitted Zuffa to increase its market dominance, Plaintiffs have also established that Defendants used a variety of ruthless coercive techniques to prevent fighters from becoming free agents—rendering these contracts effectively perpetual.”<sup>4</sup>

Judge Bouleware continued by writing:

“Additionally, for the reasons discussed at length below, exclusionary contracts limit the ability for new entrants to obtain the essential input—fighter services—for the business. The Court now examines evidence related to artificial barriers to entry. The Court finds that Plaintiffs have established evidence of three main barriers to entry for competitors: (1) coercive contracts that restrict the overall supply of fighters that competitors can access, (2) lack of cross-promotion, and (3) dominance in the Headliner market. These barriers to entry made it prohibitively expensive and difficult for new entrants in the input (and output) market to effectively compete with Zuffa. Given the artificial and intentional nature of these barriers, they are not self-correcting through natural market forces.”<sup>5</sup>

Judge Bouleware also made the following finding against the UFC:

“The Court finds that Plaintiffs have established that Defendant willfully engaged in anticompetitive conduct to maintain or increase their market power. This was

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<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60663d496017a751ed8ca929/t/64f0be3a50c08c01b09e845f/1693498938800/BoutClass.pdf>, P. 36.

<sup>5</sup> Id. at 31.

mainly accomplished in three ways: first, through the enforcement of exclusionary contracts, which kept fighters “locked up” in an anticompetitive manner; second, through extracontractual methods to make fighter contracts effectively perpetual; and third, through acquisition and shutting down of rivals.”<sup>6</sup>

And yet, despite this damning record, the same promoter now seeks to weaken the Ali Act to regain unchecked control in boxing—after already exploiting its absence in MMA.

We cannot allow this.

In MMA, unlike boxing, promotions are not required to disclose revenues or share financials with fighters. Athletes are routinely locked into long-term deals with no meaningful free agency. There are no independent, objective rankings. Fighters can be frozen out of title contention or stripped of belts unless they agree to perpetual contract extensions.

The Ali Act prohibits all of this.

The Ali Act requires rankings based on merit—not compliance or favoritism. The Ali Act seeks to prohibit promoters from being “able to rig the sport by placing favored boxers who have signed away promotional rights in the top rankings,” and for those boxers who refuse to cooperate, from being “arbitrarily dropped from the ranking or prevented from moving up.” It prevents promotions from manipulating rankings to punish fighters who don’t sign away their rights. It protects the negotiating leverage of athletes when their value is highest—when they win. And it ensures that champions are determined by performance, not by who plays along and contractual servitude.

The Ali Act brought needed reform by ending exploitive business practices and requiring objective and consistent rankings criteria. In short, the Act attempts to prevent promoters from forcing boxers into coercive contracts as a condition of participating in a given match. In other words, the Ali Act makes illegal exactly the coercive and ruthless tactics being employed by the UFC to monopolize MMA. Now, the Ali Expansion Act must do the same for MMA and all combat sports.

The impact would be transformative.

Ending these artificial restraints would unlock new investment in MMA—investment that is currently sidelined by UFC’s monopoly. Promoters would compete fairly for talent. Fighters would have real bargaining power. New opportunities would emerge for athletes, broadcasters, and fans alike. As stated in the legislative history of the Ali Act, an industry free of restraint and exploitive and unethical business practices will lead to increased competition, “and fair, open competition is key to any sport’s success.” Removal of these artificial and anti-competitive restraints will dramatically reshape the MMA industry. The entire sport would grow, organically and sustainably from the grassroots level up.

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<sup>6</sup> Id. at 33.

To be clear: the solution is not to strip away the Ali Act’s protections for boxers. The solution is to extend those protections to all fighters, regardless of discipline.

The Ali Act represents integrity, transparency, and athlete protection. The Ali Expansion Act continues that mission. We cannot allow a powerful promoter to undermine a law that took decades to achieve and stands as a beacon of reform in combat sports.

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We all sign this letter to affirm:

The Ali Act has worked.

- The Ali Expansion Act is urgently needed.
- Fighters in all disciplines deserve fair treatment, transparency, and freedom of choice.
- And the legacy of Muhammad Ali—a man who fought not just in the ring but for dignity and justice—must be upheld, not dismantled.

We call on the entire combat sports community—fighters, regulators, fans, and lawmakers—to stand with us.

Our petition opposing the Muhammad Ali Boxing Revival Act is up to 1,264 signatures, including signatures of over 430 fighters and dozens of world champions.

Protect the Ali Act. Pass the Ali Expansion Act.

Sincerely,

Carla Duran  
*/s/ Carla Duran*

Erik Magraken  
*/s/ Erik Magraken*

Juanito Ibarra  
*/s/ Juanito Ibarra*

Rob Maysey  
*/s/ Rob Maysey*

