

Opening Statement of the Honorable Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade
Hearing on “Mixed Martial Art: Issues and Perspectives”
December 8, 2016

(As prepared for delivery)

Before we turn to the matter at hand I note that this is our last hearing of the 114th Congress. I'd like to thank Vice Chairman Lance and Ranking Member Schakowsky for their hard work and the work of all of our Members. Thanks to the participation of all of our Members, we've been punching above our weight. I'm happy to close out the Congress with my CMT colleagues and look forward to next year's busy agenda.

Once more we turn our attention to something Congress has not focused upon before. As broad and varied as our jurisdiction is, mixed martial arts—especially the *industry* of MMA—is probably a new concept to some of us. As the industry continues to evolve swiftly, now is the time to bring Congress up to speed on MMA, and understand if there is a role Congress should be playing in this multi-billion-dollar industry. I also want to thank Congressman Mullin for making sure this issue is on the committee's agenda.

The latest major MMA event drew a little under 2 million viewers and around 1.5 million pay-per-view buys. It also generated about \$18 million at the gate, \$1.5 million of which went to New York in taxes.

Perhaps most importantly—since about half of MMA's fan base is comprised of millennials—the event created 14 billion “social media impressions,” which Nielsen now tracks.

The winner at the top of the fight card made \$40 million. That doesn't match what a top boxing championship fight brings, but there's no longer a doubt that MMA is ready for primetime or that it is an economic driver.

In our previous sports hearings, we grappled primarily with athlete safety and the implications of safety rules on youth sports.

The safety of MMA fighters is of utmost importance and this will figure into our broad discussion of how the MMA industry works and how it is regulated at the state level.

The politics around combat sports are tough. To some degree, fighters assume risks. All 50 states have legalized MMA and regulate it to some degree. State athletic commissions have generally promulgated rules that prohibit certain maneuvers in the ring, require certain equipment, and provide for athlete drug testing.

Some states are stricter than others, depending on the state's resources and how popular the state is as a venue for MMA.

Just like with boxing, fighters must generally obtain a license to fight. States and the major promotions also require physicians to be present and make sure fighters are healthy before and during a bout.

I thank the panelists, who represent a variety of interests and perspectives, for their participation today and look forward to a lively and interesting discussion.

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