

(<http://washingtonexaminer.com/100-days>)

## **When did micromanaging mixed martial arts become Congress' job?**

By CHARLES SAUER, CONTRIBUTOR • 12/7/16 11:38 AM

While many on the Left (and the Right) have not yet embraced President-elect Trump (</section/donald-trump>) as the next commander in chief, he's been busy filling his Cabinet with people who will correct some bad public policy, and doing so in record time. On Capitol Hill, however, it's like President Camacho from "Idiocracy" is running the place (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGUNPMPrxvA>), or at least the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade.

Reality is so close to "Idiocracy" that the subcommittee is holding a hearing Thursday to discuss a bill that would help decide, among other things, who gets ranked No. 1 in mixed martial arts.

You read that right: Congress wants to regulate mixed martial arts with the so-called Ali Expansion Act, named after Muhammad Ali. But it should really be called the "Camacho Bill."

The bill would add mixed martial artists to the list of athletes who fall under the authority of the 1996 Professional Boxing Safety Act — a 20-year-old law which itself proves Congress knows very little about micromanaging sports franchises. Under the terms of the bill, it would dictate how the market will work, how fighters should be ranked, and what kind of contracts they can sign.

If a fighter wanted to sign a contract longer than a year or prefer a different compensation agreement? They wouldn't have that choice. What about if a fighter wants to reward his promoter if he wins? That too wouldn't be allowed, unless the scheduled bout is for less than 11 minutes. In that case, the legislation wouldn't cover the fight at all.

The bill also explicitly makes it clear that the new powers of government won't expand to sports that use weapons. Apparently, even that is a step too far at this point. Maybe they're just waiting to expand that far next year. After all, they need something for the sequel: Idiocracy II.

Starting in January, it will fall to the House Energy and Commerce Committee to get the government out of healthcare and allow the private economy the space it needs to grow and thrive. Given this hearing in the Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade Subcommittee, it sounds like they will be contemplating the expansion of government into mixed martial arts and who knows what else at the same time.

But it's hard to imagine a bill that would undermine the committee's argument about the failings of the Affordable Care Act more than a bill that regulates the contracts of grown men and women who have voluntarily entered into agreements.

The right role of government should be to enforce contracts, not to regulate their terms. Maybe a fighter who knows they're likely to be hurt will want to sign a contract for more than a year, if an injury prevents them from fighting. Maybe not. That's what the freedom of contracts is about.

When Congress steps in to decide what a contract should look like, citizens end up with a policy that forces people into contracts they don't want to be in, just like Obamacare has.

About 10 years ago, the National Tax Limitation Committee (<http://limittaxes.org/>) hosted an event on Capitol Hill called the "Right Size of Government." Attended by some of the biggest academic conservative names, the conference introduced provocative ideas like the way government funding of public transportation is probably more efficient than private funding.

That was a good day of debate, but if someone in the room asked if a right-sized government would include regulation of mixed martial arts, that person might have been laughed out of the room.

Government is critical for a few things: We don't need private-sector law enforcement, courts or competing highways. However, government can be very inefficient at a lot of things. In fact, when the government gets involved where it shouldn't, things usually go bad pretty quickly.

The private sector doesn't fund a bridge to nowhere. Government is good at enforcing contracts, but not writing them.

Once government solves healthcare, poverty, education and terrorism, maybe they can look at regulating the contracts of adults with their own three-point plan like President Camacho's.

Alternatively, if members of Congress really want the American people to get their money's worth, why don't they step into the ring with some mixed martial artists?

*Charles Sauer is a contributor to the Washington Examiner's Beltway Confidential blog. He is president of the Market Institute and previously worked on Capitol Hill, for a governor and for an academic think tank. Thinking of submitting an op-ed to the Washington Examiner? Be sure to read our [guidelines on submissions](http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/editorial-guidelines).*

*<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/editorial-guidelines>*