



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Mark Grisanti

## BUFFALO NEWS: Mark Grisanti and Crystal Peoples-Stokes: It's time to legalize popular sport in New York

MARK GRISANTI May 25, 2013

| ISSUE: **RECREATION AND TOURISM**



M M A  
MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

By Sen. Mark Grisanti and Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes

Now is the time to legalize and regulate mixed martial arts (MMA) in New York. We should join the 48 states that have legalized MMA, the fastest-growing sport in the country. We recognize that MMA is not a sport for everyone, just as some are not fans of hockey, baseball, NASCAR or football. However, there are millions of New York MMA fans, who can and do watch MMA in New York already. It's on broadcast, cable and pay-per-view television. In fact, more UFC pay-per-view events are purchased by New Yorkers than by residents of any other state. Additionally,

while professional MMA is banned here, amateur MMA is not (although it is not regulated, putting the safety of fighters in question). Not only is amateur MMA legal in New York, so are the disciplines that comprise MMA – boxing, wrestling, judo, karate, kickboxing, Muay Thai and taekwondo, many of which are Olympic sports. Gyms across the state – and here in Western New York – are teaching children and adults MMA and its various disciplines. A Johns Hopkins University study has shown that if properly regulated, MMA is as safe as, if not safer than, other contact sports. Another reason New York should legalize and regulate MMA is economics 101. We should do it for the jobs, revenue, tourism and economic activity that professional MMA will generate. Many will recall that the UFC – the world's largest MMA promoter – hosted an event at the Rogers Centre in Toronto two years ago that drew more than 50,000 fans (many from New York) and produced more than \$40 million in economic activity in just one weekend. UFC has promised that if legalized, it will host at least four events per year in New York – three upstate – in the first three years. Other national promoters have made similar commitments. Many regional and local promoters will also produce events. Just imagine what an event at the First Niagara Center will produce. More than 15,000 tickets will be sold, many to fans from outside our region. Those fans will eat in downtown restaurants and shop in stores; many will stay in hotels. It will produce millions in desperately needed economic activity and provide wages to hundreds of local employees. The bill to legalize MMA has passed the Senate – with overwhelming bipartisan majorities – for the last four years. This year, the Assembly bill is sponsored by Majority Leader Joe Morelle, along with 63 co-sponsors. The support is there. We hope readers will urge their Assembly member to fight to make 2013 the year that New York legalizes and regulates MMA – for the jobs, the economic activity and for the fans. Mark Grisanti, R-Buffalo, represents the 60th District in the New York State Senate. Crystal Peoples-Stokes, D-Buffalo, represents the 141st District in the State Assembly.