



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo Bill Provides Needed Oversight for Amateur MMA

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO June 18, 2014

| ISSUE: **RECREATION AND TOURISM**

ALBANY – The New York State Senate has passed a bill ([S.4877](#)) that would, for the first time, establish rules and regulations for amateur mixed martial arts bouts.

Griffo has long been a proponent of lifting the ban on professional mixed martial arts events in New York. Professional mixed martial arts are regulated with imposed time limits, a fixed number of rounds, licensed judges, five weight classes and almost three dozen other rules governing how bouts are fought.

Amateur bouts, by comparison, can be legally run in New York without a sanctioning organization. This bill would address this inconsistency by putting the New York State Athletic Commission in charge of bouts.

“In my advocacy for mixed martial arts, I’ve met many fighters and promoters. All want to make the bouts as safe as possible - not just for the fighters, but for the judges, refs and fans,” said Griffo, R-Rome.

“However, there was a lack of consistency among amateur contests. Most promoters would ensure their bouts were sanctioned by an established and reputable organization. A few, however, put profit over safety and held bouts that put fans and fighters at unnecessary risk.”

“This bill brings the entire amateur realm under the oversight of the New York Athletic Commission,” said Griffo. “It will put the emphasis where it should be – creating a safe and enjoyable experience for all.”

The bill would establish a medical advisory board and commission to have jurisdiction over amateur matches. It would require participants to undergo a thorough physical examination, including neurological and neurophysical examinations, prior to being approved for a fight. No one could fight unless they were 18 years of age or older.

The bill would also prohibit fighters who suffered a KO or TKO – or were rendered unconscious – from participating in a match for 90 days. It requires promoters to provide insurance for participants and reimburse athletes for medical, surgical and hospital care that was a result of participating in the program.

Without mandating it, the bill gives the Commission the ability to require medical personnel and an ambulance at the site of match.

Any fighter, referee or judge who participates in an amateur match without being licensed by the Commission would be guilty of a misdemeanor.

“Amateur bouts are a great way for up-and-coming fighters to get real ring experience,” said Griffo. “I want to keep them safe while they make their way to the top. And it’s my hope that the Legislature will legalize professional MMA so that we can cheer on our local fighter someday in Madison Square Garden or the Times-Union Center.”

Legally sanctioned professional MMA events in New York would generate \$67 million in annual spending and create 525 jobs, according to the latest economic analysis by HR&A Advisors.