



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

NYS Senator Brad Hoylman Dismayed by Senate Passage of MMA Bill

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL March 6, 2013

Albany, March 6, 2013—Today, the New York State Senate passed legislation (S2755) to legalize Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) in New York State. Senator Brad Hoylman (D, WFP - Manhattan) joined 14 of his colleagues in voting against the bill. MMA, which is also known as cage fighting, ultimate fighting, or no-holds barred fighting, has been dubbed by U.S. Senator John McCain as “the human equivalent of cockfighting.” MMA, along with boxing, stands apart from every other sanctioned sport because its aim is to cause physical harm and injury to an opponent until they are unable to continue, the primary goal being to knock the opponent unconscious, which has been shown in numerous medical studies to result in acute brain damage. The immediate effects of blows to the head include grogginess, paralysis, weakening of limbs, inability to focus, and possible loss of consciousness. The long-term effects of Mixed Martial Arts on the brains of fighters are cumulative and may not show until long after a fighter’s retirement. According to medical experts, including the British Medical Association, fighters are more likely to suffer from conditions such as dementia, Alzheimer’s (from which Muhammad Ali suffers) and Parkinson’s.

The bill will go before the Assembly, where its fate is uncertain.

Senator Hoylman said: “I am saddened that the New York State Senate passed legislation to

sanction MMA in New York with the lure of tax revenue.

“There are a multitude of arguments on why we as a legislative body should not sanction or glorify MMA’s violence, especially given the impact it would have on our children. As the father of a two-year old child, I weigh this argument very seriously. But I am most concerned with the health and well-being of the fighters. MMA is only a few steps away from the gladiatorial contests of ancient Rome or Greece.

“A class action lawsuit was filed last year by more than 4,000 former NFL players and their wives accusing the NFL of hiding information that linked football-related head trauma to permanent brain injury. Is this the future we are sanctioning today for MMA fighters? But unlike the NFL, participants in MMA have no labor protections. The UFC, which has a near-monopoly over the sport, exploits fighters with pernicious contracts and locks out fighters who attempt to bargain for quality health insurance, pensions or a greater percentage of merchandizing revenue. The scant health insurance provisions in the bill do not cover long-term care for any of the conditions likely to manifest decades after chronic brain injuries. The life insurance provisions are similarly dismal. Moreover, no amount of money can compensate for permanent brain damage and premature death.

“The days of gladiator fights are over and we shouldn’t be looking to resurrect them.”