



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Flanagan

Senate Passes Bill Legalizing Mixed Martial Arts In New York State

JOHN J. FLANAGAN February 1, 2016

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The New York State Senate has passed legislation for the seventh consecutive year to legalize and regulate mixed martial arts (MMA) competitions in New York, removing a 1997 statewide ban on the sport. The bill ([S5949A](#)), sponsored by Senator Joseph Griffo (R-C-I, Rome), would authorize and regulate professional competitions in New York State and includes provisions that would help protect the health and safety of participants.

Senate Majority Leader John J. Flanagan said, “New York is the only state missing out on the jobs and other economic benefits that would be created from the legalization of professional

MMA competitions. As we have done for several years, the Senate has again passed a bill allowing MMA and this year, the Governor has also proposed it as part of his Executive Budget. The Assembly should take up MMA now so that our state can realize the economic potential of competitions here in New York.”

Senator Griffo said, “I have long led the Senate’s efforts to bring professional MMA to New York, and I am proud that we are now the closest we’ve ever come to legalizing this competitive sport in our state. By passing my MMA bill for the seventh year in a row, the Senate is continuing the momentum to finally allow these fighters to compete safely within their home state under the guidelines of the State Athletic Commission. Mixed martial arts offers significant economic opportunities to the communities that host these popular events and, with the Governor’s public support this year, I am optimistic that fans and fighters alike will soon be able to experience MMA in New York.”

New York is the only state in the nation that prohibits professional MMA events. The sport continues to grow in popularity in the state due to amateur bouts and an increase in the number of MMA competitors hailing from New York.

The Senate has led the bipartisan efforts to bring MMA to New York by passing legislation each year since 2010. Legalizing MMA was also part of the Senate’s 2015-16 budget resolution. This year’s Executive Budget also included a proposal to allow Mixed Martial Arts matches in New York State and included an estimated \$1 million in revenue the sport would generate in Fiscal Year 2017. In the past, the Assembly has refused to put the bill to a vote, despite studies that have projected significant economic benefits.

A 2013 study reported that legalizing professional MMA would potentially generate \$68 million annually in New York from MMA events, \$33 million of which would be generated in upstate cities. In addition, training centers could generate \$67 million each year from

operations, for a total of \$135 million in economic activity annually in the state.

This legislation would also help ensure the safety and welfare of professional combative sports participants by establishing the New York State Athletic Commission as the recognized authority to properly regulate bouts. The bill requires essential increases in the insurance limits and financial guarantees required to protect boxers and mixed martial artists. Participants would also be required to undergo a comprehensive physical examination, including a clinical neurological and neurophysical exam, in order to obtain or renew a license from the Commission.

The bill has been sent to the Assembly.