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“The main objective of Olympic-style boxing’s rules and the actions and decisions of the referee is the safety and protection of boxers.”

—USA Boxing, Inc.

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Feasibility Study of Removing Amateur Boxing From the Jurisdiction of the State Boxing Commission

Report No. 13-05, June 2013

USA Boxing controls and supervises amateur boxing

Continued state regulation of amateur boxing is unnecessary

In 1929, the Territorial Legislature enacted Act 216, which defined amateur boxing contests and contestants and authorized a state boxing commission to place such contests under the control and supervision of any recognized national amateur athletic association. As authorized by Section 440-30, HRS, the boxing commission has made this delegation to USA Boxing, which under federal law is also recognized by the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) as the national governing body for the sport of amateur boxing. All amateur boxing contests in the U.S. must be sanctioned by USA Boxing and conducted in accordance with USA Boxing rules and the USOC requirements.

Unlike professional boxing, in which the intent is to hurt or render the opponent unconscious, the main objective of amateur or Olympic-style boxing’s rules and the actions and decisions of the referee is to ensure the safety and protection of boxers. As the sport has evolved, USA Boxing rule and equipment changes have improved the boxer safety. Medical studies have shown that the overall risk of injury in amateur boxing is lower than other contact sports such as football, ice hockey, wrestling, and soccer.

Hawai'i’s sunset law, Chapter 26H, HRS, provides that regulation is justified only if there is a need to protect the consumer. In the case of amateur boxing, regulation is primarily to protect the contestant rather than the public. Not only is there little evidence of harm in amateur boxing, but the abuses we found were negligible. Although the majority of stakeholders are in favor of continued state regulation and oversight, most also believed that USA Boxing rules provide the same protection against harm and abuse.

USA Boxing rules are updated biennially; state administrative rules not updated since 1991

The commission has adopted administrative rules for amateur boxing; however, we found that the rules have not been updated since 1991, whereas USA Boxing rules are updated biennially. We noted significant differences between the two, and concluded that the commission’s rules are not only outdated but also obsolete. As noted by the executive director of USA Boxing, if USA Boxing rules are not followed, it may affect a boxer’s eligibility to compete nationally, internationally, and in the Olympics. Accordingly, we recommend that the commission amend its administrative rules to delete provisions for amateur boxing and instead make reference to USA Boxing’s rules.

In addition, we noted that USA Boxing registration forms for both athletes and non-athletes contain a waiver and release section indemnifying USA Boxing, Inc., its clubs, and local boxing committee affiliates from lawsuits. The commission has not been in compliance with its own administrative rules, specifically HAR Section 16-74-345, which requires each boxer to sign a waiver form releasing the commission from all claims for damages arising from the boxer’s participation in a boxing contest. We recommend the commission begin requiring the use of the Amateur Boxing Waiver form, which has been in existence since 2006.

Agency response

The Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs agreed with our recommendation to the Legislature to remove amateur boxing from the jurisdiction of the State Boxing Commission. The department also agreed to implement our recommended changes to the administrative rules and procedural requirements should the Legislature decide to continue regulation.