

The Connecticut General Assembly

House Democrats

James A. Amann
Speaker of the House



TESTIMONY

Commerce Committee

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

HB5881

AN ACT CONCERNING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR AMATEUR BOXING

Chairman Berger, chairman LeBeau, and members of the Commerce Committee, I am here in support of bill number 5881 concerning financial assistance for amateur boxing.

Boxing, as you probably know, is not a sport that is competed at either an interscholastic or NCAA collegiate level. Yet, it is a sport with a storied history and remains very popular throughout the world at both an amateur and professional level.

It has been 10 years since I authored legislation creating a Connecticut boxing promotion commission. In 2006 I then sponsored a bill empowering the Department of Public Safety with regulatory authority over all amateur and professional boxing in the state.

We are proud to report that this new approach is paying dividends in the form of more professional sporting events adding to the state's economy, and a thriving amateur boxing scene offering our young people an option to the streets.

Amateur boxing continues to grow around the state with about 20 gyms and clubs operating active programs for local youths. The boxing clubs not only help develop aspiring boxers, but provide a great after school haven for kids looking for a positive option to street life.

In 2006, the Western New England Golden Gloves amateur boxing tournament relocated from Massachusetts to Connecticut. Wonderfully run by the Manchester Police Activities League, this premier annual event attracts sell out crowds and the best young boxers from the region.

Undefeated professional Matt Remillard, who is on the verge of a world title opportunity in the featherweight division, is a proud alumnus of Manchester PAL and the Golden

Gloves. Former world champion Travis Simms of Norwalk is also a product of amateur boxing and the Olympic program.

With HB 5881 we have an opportunity to attract a national organization such as USA/Olympic Boxing to establish a headquarters in Connecticut that would create a synergy in amateur boxing that would greatly expand after school programming for our youth throughout the state.

Their 'Gloves Not Guns' program focuses on reducing youth violence through participation in a sports program that attracts at risk youth. In conjunction with organizations such as Police Athletic Leagues and Boys & Girls Clubs, many new opportunities and options for our youth would be created.

In addition, the USA 'Boxing University' program, which has already received interest from a number of Connecticut colleges, is a life skills curriculum for participating boxers.

From an economic standpoint, events associated with USA Boxing and the Olympics is the type of brand that can help add to our state's national profile and attract visitors from across the country.

There is no question that boxing is going through a renaissance as a popular spectator sport, and here in Connecticut we can build upon and take advantage of our rich history of great world champions such as Willie Pep and Marlon Starling.

The Department of Public Safety and the Boxing Commission deserves a lot of credit for the growing success the sport is having here in Connecticut. HB 5881 takes advantage of that momentum and has the potential to bring us to a new level, while jumpstarting a great after school program for our youth.

Thank you and I'll be happy to take any questions.