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## **OLR Bill Analysis**

### **sHB 5269**

#### ***AN ACT REGULATING MIXED MARTIAL ARTS MATCHES.***

#### **SUMMARY:**

This bill legalizes mixed martial arts, subject to regulation by the Department of Public Safety (DPS). "Mixed martial arts" means unarmed combat involving a combination of techniques from different martial arts disciplines, including grappling, kicking, jujitsu, and striking. The bill generally subjects the sport to the same laws governing boxing. Among other things, it:

1. requires match promoters, referees, sponsors, and combatants to be licensed by DPS (§ 1(g), 2, & 8);
2. requires organizations, gymnasiums, or clubs hosting matches to register with DPS and pay a \$100 fee ( § 1(f));
3. allows the commissioner to investigate match venues for safety (§ 1(c));
4. requires participants to be certified by a doctor and found to be in good health (§ 10);
5. prohibits betting on matches (§ 13);
6. prohibits anyone under age 18 from participating in matches (§ 12);
7. imposes a 5% tax on gross receipts from admissions to matches (§ 3);
8. requires referees licensed and approved by the commissioner to be present at all matches (§§ 7 & 8);
9. prohibits matches on Christmas Day, Good Friday, Memorial

Day, and Veterans' Day (§ 9);

10. prohibits the commissioner from issuing a license to conduct or hold mixed martial arts matches where prohibited by local ordinance (§ 15); and
11. requires the commissioner to adopt implementing regulations setting license fees and governing the conduct, supervision, and safety of matches (§ 1(g)).

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2011

## **§ 1 — JURISDICTION OVER MIXED MARTIAL ARTS MATCHES**

### ***Regulation of Mixed Martial Arts***

The bill gives the DPS commissioner jurisdiction over professional mixed martial arts matches. It allows him to appoint (1) inspectors to represent him at matches and (2) a secretary to prepare any required notices and papers for service and perform other duties as he directs. It allows the state, at the commissioner's discretion, to contract with people to serve as inspectors.

### ***Enforcement***

The bill allows the commissioner or his representative to investigate (1) the location of, and paraphernalia and equipment to be used in, matches and (2) all other matters related to mixed martial arts. He (1) must determine whether matches will be reasonably safe for participants and attendees and (2) may make reasonable orders to alter or improve the equipment and paraphernalia and the type and arrangement of seats, exits, lighting, firefighting appliances, fire and police protection, and other provisions to make matches reasonably safe from both fire and casualty hazards.

### ***Injury Reports***

The bill requires the owner of any match venue where a serious physical injury or death from a match occurs to report it to the commissioner or his designee within four hours after it occurs. The commissioner or his designee must investigate the incident within four

hours after receiving the report to determine the cause, and they may enter any registered or licensed premises to conduct further investigation or inspection.

### ***Registration Requirement***

The bill requires organizations, gymnasiums, or independent clubs hosting mixed martial arts matches to register with DPS. The commissioner must register applicants he deems qualified to host matches. The registration fee is \$100, and the applicant must include it with the application. The commissioner or a designee may inspect the applicant's facility to enforce the law.

The attorney general, at the commissioner's request, may apply to the Superior Court for a temporary or permanent order to restrain any organization, gymnasium, or independent club from operating in violation of any pertinent law.

### ***Regulations***

The commissioner must adopt regulations to (1) govern the conduct, safety, and supervision of mixed martial arts matches, including the licensing of match sponsors and participants, and (2) set reasonable license fees for sponsors, combatants, and participants.

## **§ 2 — LICENSING**

The bill allows the commissioner to issue, and revoke for cause, licenses to conduct, hold, or operate mixed martial arts matches.

Before being licensed, an applicant must execute and file a bond with the commissioner in an amount and form and with such surety as the commissioner determines. The bond must be conditioned upon the payment of the 5% tax on gross receipts from admissions to a mixed martial arts match (see below). When the commissioner approves the bond, he must give the applicant a certificate of the filing and his approval.

## **§§ 3 & 4 — TAX PAYMENTS AND REPORTS**

The bill imposes a 5% tax on promoters and sponsors of martial arts

matches. The tax, which is on the gross receipts from admissions, after federal taxes have been deducted, must be paid into the State Treasury. The bill requires sponsors and promoters, within 24 hours after a match ends, to give the commissioner a written, verified report. The report must state the number of tickets sold for the match or exhibition, gross receipts, and any other information the commissioner prescribes.

The commissioner may (1) examine the books or records of a violator who did not file the report within the deadline or failed to include sufficient information and (2) subpoena and examine the violator under oath to determine the amount of the gross receipts and tax due. He may then fix the amount of tax due. Licensees who fail to pay the tax owed, plus expenses the commissioner incurred in conducting the examination, within 20 days after being notified, forfeit their license and may not be relicensed. They must also pay a \$500 fine.

#### **§ 5 — VIOLATIONS**

The bill makes it illegal to sell more tickets to a martial arts match than the seating capacity of the venue. The fine is up to \$200 for a first violation. For a subsequent violation, the fine is \$500 and (1) the club, corporation, or person forfeits the license, and (2) the corporation or association's officers must pay a fine of up to \$200.

#### **§ 6 — TICKET PRICES**

The bill requires the admission and seat prices at any mixed martial arts match to be published in a newspaper published and circulated in the town, city, or borough where the match will take place or, if no newspaper is published in the area, in a newspaper having a substantial circulation in the area. The publication must be made in at least three separate editions of the paper and in a space no less than two inches by three inches.

#### **§ 9 — DAYS WHEN MATCHES ARE PROHIBITED**

The bill prohibits mixed martial arts matches on Christmas Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, and Veterans' Day.

## **§§ 7, 8, & 10 — RULES GOVERNING MATCHES**

### ***Limits on Rounds***

The bill imposes a five-round limit on a mixed martial arts match and requires at least a one-minute rest period after each round. It requires a referee approved by the commissioner to be present to direct and control every match (§ 7).

### ***Referees Must be Licensed***

The bill requires the commissioner to select and license the referees for mixed martial arts matches conducted, held, or promoted in Connecticut (§ 8).

### ***Physical Condition of Fighters***

The bill prohibits anyone from fighting in a mixed martial arts match unless the person has been examined and found to be physically fit by a competent physician approved by the commissioner and licensed to practice in Connecticut for at least two years. The physician must be appointed by the commissioner and attend the entire match for which the examination is made. The physician must certify, in writing, that the contestant is physically fit to participate in the match.

The physician's fee, as determined by the commissioner, must be paid by the person, club, corporation, or association conducting the match. The cost of any required physical examination, other than the above fee, may be assessed by the commissioner on any fighter examined by a physician appointed by the commissioner or on the person, club, corporation, or association conducting the next match in which the fighter is scheduled to compete (§ 10).

## **§ 11 — FINES**

The bill subjects to a \$200 fine a principal, manager, second, promoter, or matchmaker who receives or accepts, any money or other form of payment from any mixed martial arts fighter for any special privilege or any type of discrimination relating to a match.

## **§§ 12 & 14 — AGE LIMITS**

The bill prohibits anyone under age 18 from engaging in mixed

martial arts matches. It prohibits anyone under age 18 from being admitted to any mixed martial arts exhibition, except that a person age 14 or older may be admitted if accompanied by a parent or guardian.

**§ 13 — BETS**

The bill prohibits betting on mixed martial arts matches.

**§ 15 — LOCAL ORDINANCES PROHIBITING MIXED MARTIAL ARTS**

The bill prohibits the commissioner from issuing a license to conduct or hold mixed martial arts matches where prohibited by local ordinance.

**§§ 16 & 17 — EXEMPTION FROM PRIZE FIGHT BAN**

The bill eliminates mixed martial arts matches from a prohibition on prize fights.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Public Safety and Security Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 24 Nay 1 (03/01/2011)