

Statement of Chairman McCain
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Hearing on Professional Boxing
February 5, 2003

- I welcome the accomplished witnesses who are appearing before the Committee today and thank those who made special arrangements to be here.
- The purpose of this hearing is to examine the current state of professional boxing so that this Committee can determine what further steps should be taken to further reform the sport.
- Over the past seven years, this Committee has been diligent in its efforts to address the problems that plague the sport of professional boxing. We have worked to enact two federal boxing laws, the Professional Boxing Safety Act of 1996, and the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act of 2000. These laws were intended to establish minimum uniform standards to improve the health and safety of boxers, and to better protect them from the often coercive, exploitative, and unethical business practices of promoters, managers, and sanctioning organizations. While these laws have had a positive impact on professional boxing, the sport remains beset with a variety of problems, some beyond the scope of local regulation.
- So we find ourselves here again discussing many of the same problems surrounding professional boxing. Promoters continue to steal fighters from each other, sanctioning organizations make unmerited ratings changes without offering adequate explanations, promoters refuse to pay fighters who have put their lives on the line, local boxing commissions fail to ensure the protection of boxers' health and safety, boxers are contractually and financially exploited, and the list continues. Nearly every week, my office receives a call from a parent who's child was killed in a match asking why proper medical or safety precautions were not taken by the local commission with jurisdiction, and I receive calls from boxers who have worked tirelessly to escape poverty, only to find themselves subject to the exploitation of the unscrupulous few who control the sport.
- In light of the ongoing problems that continue to exist within professional boxing, Senator Dorgan and I have introduced the Professional Boxing Amendments Act of 2003. The bill would strengthen existing federal boxing law, and create a federal regulatory entity to oversee the sport. This entity, which would be called the United States Boxing Administration (USBA), would be headed by an Administrator appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate. A very similar proposal was reported unanimously by this Committee last September.
- There has been quite a bit of confusion among local commissions regarding the effect that this bill would have on them. Let me be clear. The purpose of the USBA would not be to micro-manage boxing by interfering with the daily operations of local boxing commissions. Instead, the USBA would work in consultation with local commissions, and the USBA Administrator would only exercise his/her authority should reasonable grounds exist for intervention.
- I look forward to hearing the views of our witnesses regarding this legislative proposal and receiving their comments on how existing federal boxing law can be strengthened.