

## BOXING BILL? BIG FRIGGIN' DEAL

Written by Charles Jay  
Wednesday, 18 September 2002 18:00

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A lot of people ask me why I'm not giving a lot of coverage to the "Professional Boxing Amendments Act of 2002", the new legislation that is currently in circulation in Congress. No doubt it's a legitimate question. And so I like to think I have a legitimate answer for you.

Let's give a little background first, for those who haven't paid much attention. This bill, S2500, is to be "marked up" today, where it will be voted through committee and placed into a "queue", from which it will be slated for debate on the Senate floor. How soon that happens probably depends on how seamlessly it can be fit into the schedule between other, more important bills that will take longer to debate.

From there, the Senate will vote on it. If it passes, it will then go to the House of Representatives. If the House passes it, it will be submitted to the President for signature, at which point it would become law. Then the procedure for nominating and appointing the so-called national boxing "czar" will take place.

Much has been made over the fact that Nevada Senator Harry Reid (Democrat), who has a competing bill, will serve as a stumbling block for this legislation to pass. Reid's bill, which is called the National Boxing Commission Act, is, on balance, superior to the aforementioned Professional Boxing Amendments Act. The fundamental difference between the substance of Reid's bill and the Amendments Act, which is sponsored by John McCain, is that Reid insists upon the licensing of commercial networks as "promoters", and favors a five-person committee, rather than a single boxing "administrator", sitting at the top of the regulatory structure.

It also centralizes authority a little more, leaving less in the hands of incompetent (for the most part) state boxing commissions. Of course, that's also the problem with the bill, in that states are not likely to be willing to give up too much in the way of sovereign rights.

Nevertheless, when all is said and done, Reid is going to have to be fully satisfied in some way, considering his position as Majority Whip of the Senate. McCain has already taken a step toward him, including a change in the Boxing Amendments Act to facilitate regulation of networks as promoters.

So why is it that I haven't paid much lip service to all this?

Because, frankly, I'm not sure any of it really matters.

First of all, the Boxing Amendments Act has to pass. And through the years, better legislation than this poorly-written mess has been put forward and died in the House or Senate.

And considering we've been through more than fifty chapters in this series, trying to bring

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many of the REAL-WORLD issues in boxing into the discourse, it's quite remarkable - and equally as alarming - how few of those issues, which carry serious weight, have even been addressed by this, or any other legislation. The most important matters that could possibly be covered - things like the conflicts of interests involving network employees who also promote fights and fighters (i.e., Russell Peltz at ESPN), the establishment of a practical process in the selection of officials for championship fights, the regulation of relationships between promoters and fighters, malfeasance on the part of boxing commissions, or a system for arbitrating disputes between parties that are subject to licensure, just to name a few, are avoided like the plague.

Why? Because those who put together this bill, and other bills before it, have made the conscious decision to consult with nitwits or those with only self-interest at heart instead of honest, experienced people who actually have a working knowledge of the boxing industry. And, quite possibly, because they're lazy, ignorant, indifferent, or all three.

Before "Operation Cleanup" was published, they may have had an excuse for their lack of knowledge. Now there ARE no excuses. Who could be faulted for coming to the conclusion but that these people just don't give a damn about the long-term interests of boxing, but rather a short-term interest that might satisfy a political objective?

Much of the blame has to be laid at the feet of Senator John McCain. He brought aboard a guy named Kenneth Nahigian - one of those "instant experts" who has never had a clue - to write the bill and screen the people who would be considered for the position of boxing "czar". You should see his list of candidates (actually, you WILL, a couple of chapters from now). Some of these people, and who they represent, should actually be the SUBJECT of an investigation, rather than the ones who would be empowered with DIRECTING an investigation. But then again, that's what you wind up with when you don't know a goddamn thing.

At the beginning of this process, I was more than willing to help out. I wrote a letter to Nahigian, explaining what I would be doing and offering any assistance I could. Example - "I am not interested in detracting from the campaign to better the sport and business of professional boxing, but rather, to ensure that the correct path is taken to addressing the problems that have plagued it. I'm sure that you share my concern, and recognize that I can be of help to any sincere effort."

I'll tell you what his response was, and I'll quote this directly:

"I don't know how you got this e-mail address, but I would appreciate if you would never use it again."

That told me everything I needed to know about who and what Nahigian was, right there. And if that doesn't tell you enough about him, in the process of gathering information for the purposes of putting together a "boxing reform" measure, he's actually utilized Russell Peltz as a "consultant"! Perhaps that explains why Peltz, who has committed some of the most egregious violations against the best interests of boxing, not to mention the public interest,

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and whose case study should actually serve as a CATALYST for useful boxing reform legislation, has not, and WILL not, be touched in any way, shape or form, if Nahigian has his way.

It's one thing to construct a useless bill. It's quite another to be an "enabler", which appears to be what Nahigian is.

At the risk of sounding self-aggrandizing - inasmuch as we're well past fifty chapters in this series, for which I have received unanimous praise, do you think - just maybe - that it might have done this guy any good to have a little dialogue with me somewhere along the way?

Not that Nahigian would even hesitate to take an original story of mine and transform it into some political capital for himself and his boss. On July 17, someone faxed him a copy of Chapter 35 of this series, entitled "Hijacking in the Hoosier State", and about ten minutes later he was at the word processor, typing a letter to the WBC on behalf of McCain (which was later shown on HBO) that was completely based on the "Operation Cleanup" story, making each and every one of the points I had already made in Chapter 35, about the fiasco in Indiana which took place when it came to the selection of officials for the Vernon Forrest-Shane Mosley fight.

I'm almost sorry I enabled HIM.

By the way Ken, notwithstanding the fact that your e-mail address (

Kenneth\_Nahigian@commerce.senate.gov

) is public, I got it from Tim Lueckenhoff, President of the Association of Boxing Commissioners, who apparently thought it was important enough that I have it.

So now you know.

It's interesting that every one of these chapters has been sent via e-mail to a rather large mailing list of boxing people, and NOT ONCE have I gotten a reply even remotely resembling that of "I don't know how you got this e-mail address, but I would appreciate if you would never use it again."

But maybe I shouldn't be surprised if everyone on that list cared more about the future of boxing than one Kenneth Nahigian.

Another thing that has brought up on these pages before is that what matters infinitely more than the quality of the LAW is the quality of the PEOPLE who are going to carry out that law. I don't know when people are going to wake up to this piece of reality. If you're talking about the state commission structure being responsible for enforcing the law and identifying violators, you're in trouble, because then you are trusting enforcement to a group of which 80%-90% are either incompetent, uninterested, uninformed, or corrupt. And the people they consider to be the most knowledgeable are often the ones who are the most

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clueless.

As long as you have the same people in place, what in the world is going to be any different about the QUALITY of regulation?

No one has to school me on any of this - I've seen it in action. And as for any boxing "writer" who thinks all of this is a wonderful thing for the game - go out and spend ten years learning what this industry is all about, THEN come back and give me your opinion, okay?

Go ahead - sit there with a straight face and tell me that you actually FAVOR a group which numbers Jack "Mr. Negligence" Kerns among its LEADERSHIP having control over ANY part of the process of regulating boxing on a grand scale, and I'll laugh you right out of this business.

Well, apparently John McCain, Byron Dorgan, and Ken Nahigian feel that way.

Think about it.

I'm too busy laughing.

I'm also tired right now. This conversation is to be continued.....

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