Greg Sirb, longtime executive director of the Pennsylvania State Athletic Commission, has declared war on Germany, or at least that country's boxing commission.

Sirb, who served as president of the United States-based Association of Boxing Commissions from 1992 to ’98, is incensed that 47-year-old former WBC heavyweight champion Oliver “The Atomic Bull” McCall, who was on medical suspension in the U.S., nonetheless was allowed to fight on May 16 in Frankfurt, Germany, where he lost a 10-round, unanimous decision to unbeaten Italian southpaw Francesco Pianeta, who is 20 years McCall’s junior.

“It’s ridiculous,” an obviously miffed Sirb said from his office in Harrisburg, Pa. “It’s been an issue with Germany for some time now. I’m going to bring it up at the ABC meeting (July 21-25 in Clearwater, Fla.) and tell all our state commissioners we shouldn’t be sending fighters over there anymore. ”

The always opinionated Sirb, in fact, isn’t disposed to cool his heels while waiting to make his case to representatives of the world governing bodies, who have been invited to attend the ABC confab. Known for his ringside feistiness and disinclination to back down from any fight, Sirb has fired off a volley of emails to officials around the country and the world alerting them to a situation he believes should be addressed immediately. That email reads:

As per the Oliver McCall fight in Frankfurt, Germany, on May 12, 2012, Mr. McCall was under medical suspension from the Mohegan Sun Athletic Commission since Nov. 11, 2011, for a serious medical condition.

This is at least the third time the German Boxing Commission has allowed an American boxer to compete in their country while under medical suspension. As world boxing groups, I really think it is time to STOP sanctioning any title fights in Germany.

This is maybe the only pressure that will make this group take notice of how serious the situation is. No more title bouts – at least until they comply with a basic RULE that if a boxer is on medical suspension, they cannot fight.

It is simple when you have any U.S. fighter competing in a foreign country. It should be the responsibility of that foreign boxing commission to request a Fight Fax so that they can determine that boxer’s accurate record and if that boxer is under any type lf suspension.

At the upcoming ABC meeting I will be instructing all members NOT to comply with any requests from the German Boxing Commission. This commission has totally ignored the national suspension list and has put one too many boxers at risk.

Of course, Sirb's tough talk is likely to fall upon more than a few deaf ears. Although there are American laws on the books to protect the interests and physical well-being of fighters –specifically the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act and Professional Boxing Safety Act – the provisions of those laws lack real teeth and are enforced more or less the same as those prohibiting jaywalking and spitting on the sidewalk.

Sirb's position is that, to truly serve the sport and its participants, those laws already in place need to consist of something more than commendable words, and – you have heard this before – a federal boxing commission with far-reaching powers needs to be created.

"You have to have uniform physicals, uniform medical standards, uniform contractual agreements and a place where all contracts and documentation can be registered in one place," Sirb said. "You need to show an ID cards, to pass your medicals, to have insurance. Those should be basic requirements if you're going to have boxing in your state, or anywhere."

Sounds reasonable, but the realization of Sirb's vision would require the clearing of a veritable minefield of complications that reformers have been unable to agree on for at least the last half-century, and likely would be unable to resolve even if there was a consensus reached by boxing's movers and shakers.

In this election year, with the U.S. national debt approaching $17 *trillion* dollars, taxes on the rise and basic goods and services being slashed at every level of government, would American citizens dare to accept the creation of still another federal bureaucracy? And if a nation commission were to come into existence, is there any assurance it could be prevented from becoming politicized, to the possible detriment of fighters?

"It may not be the right political climate, but from the information I've seen, a national boxing commission could pay for itself very easily," said Sirb, who has retained his position under Republican and Democratic governors of Pennsylvania. "Of course, you'd still have to have state commissions. There's no way a national commission could do meat-and-potatoes work in,

say, Iowa. But you could have a uniform set of rules and a central agency to ensure that there were enforced.

“I hear people say, `A national commission will ruin boxing.’ No, it won’t. It can only make it better.”

Getting back to the matter of Germany’s non-observance of U.S. medical suspensions, Sirb is enough of a realist to understand that fighters such as McCall will still want to ply their trade there, because the sport is hugely popular in the European nation and the better paydays on the other side of the Atlantic are perceived as being worth the risk.

“Guys get paid well to fight over there,” Sirb conceded. “It’s professional boxing. You want to fight for the biggest purses you can command. But although there is no hard and fast set of rules that will be perfectly fair to everyone, and a lot of areas that need to be judged on a case-by-case basis, the one line that should never be crossed is the one regarding observance of medical suspensions. Boxing is not tiddlywinks. You never should take unnecessary chances with fighters’ lives and health.

“If the German commission is going to allow people to fight while on medical suspension, they might as well disband. It’s a horrible situation. We get pretty good cooperation from the boxing commissions of most other countries. I don’t know what the freakin’ problem is with Germany.”

Comment on this article

deepwater says:

hey sirb here is your rifle,ammo, and parachute good luck. oliver mccall can do whatever oliver mccall wants in germany. if germany finds him ready to fight then its on them. how bout you pay more attention to the crooked judges and under the table payouts in your great state of philly. the home of bring your own beer to the strip club is ok with me.

deepwater says:

a federal boxing commission with far-reaching powers needs to be created." maybe a short guy with a lil mustace can head the new all powerful federal commision and round people up . f that idea.

Radam G says:

The Atomic Bull has a right to fight under the "Disability Act." Later for a demigod, corrupted commissioner who thinks that he is the BIG and powerful ALL MIGHTY.

A little high-blood pressure, and a whole lot of other syet of aging, would not stop McCall from going to war and getting injured or kill. Greg Sirb is hating because his sorry arse cannot possible do half of what the Atomic Bull does. Still nobody has given the Atomic Bull a beaten yet in the man's whole career. Dude been fudged up mentally, but physically, he's aight. Holla!

deepwater says:

deepwater declares war on sirb. here is a little tidbit of of google from a boxer mr sirb screwed over. you see ,sirb wants to be the big boss under the cover of looking out for fighters. the thing is once this sirb guy gets power look how they act.="when I asked Dr. Bojorquez if I could be medically cleared to accept another fight in two weeks -- on March 21 -- his response was, "You could fight next weekend if you had to."

That, Mr. Sirb, is why your decision to suspend me is inexplicable. In fact, I have yet to receive a logical or reasonable explanation of the decision you have made. Your claim of always looking out for a boxers health and well being echoes in my ear, and I appreciate and commend all commissioners who truly care about the well being of a boxer. But, in this case I feel you have overstepped your boundaries and undermined the medical profession.

Your random and capricious suspension cost me an opportunity to earn money I desperately need by participating in a fight this coming Saturday night, March 21, at The Playboy Mansion in Beverly Hills, Calif. Furthermore, your decision has cost the California promoter money (my airline ticket already has been purchased) and headaches (he now must find a suitable 11th-hour replacement for me on his card). Finally, your decision has damaged my reputation in a sport in which a boxer's reputation is crucial: I accepted this fight, I promised to be there and be ready, and now -- because of your baseless decision, and through no fault of my own -- I cannot live up to my commitment.

Equally disturbing, Mr. Sirb, is this: When I called you to discuss the matter, you informed me that your decision cannot be appealed. You backtracked on that statement after I pointed out that I already had researched my right to appeal -- which, as you well know, and knew when you made the statement -- appears in Article 12 of The Boxer's Bill of Rights.

After I referred you to Article 12 of The Boxer's Bill of Rights, I pointed out that your decision conflicts with the judgment of the medical doctor who examined me on the night of the fight and expressed to you that your erroneous ruling threatened my right to earn a living this coming Saturday night, March 21, in California, you made the following statements to me:

“Do you expect me to call a hearing every time a boxer wants to fight while on suspension?”

My answer to you was, "No, but I think certain circumstances do warrant special attention. I

have presented you with every piece of information to point out the error in your decision to suspend me. So, yes, I do think this is a circumstance that warrants an urgent response."

Since I have yet to receive that response, Mr. Sirb, and here I sit, one day before the California weigh-in, in my home state of Missouri, having missed today's pre-paid 6 a.m. flight to California.