

Date of Hearing: April 21, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, SPORTS, AND TOURISM
Christopher M. Ward, Chair
AB 2130 (Haney) – As Amended April 14, 2026

SUBJECT: State Athletic Commission: boxing and mixed martial arts: sponsorship contracts

SUMMARY: AB 2130 authorizes the California State Athletic Commission (CSAC) to enter into contracts or agreements to place the name or logo of an approved sponsor, Indian tribe, or nonprofit organization on referees and ringside physician apparel. The bill also directs the proceeds of the contract or agreement towards the Boxers' Pension Fund and Mixed Martial Arts Retirement Benefit Fund, and to CSAC for referee training, payment, and education.

Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Authorizes CSAC to employ an assistant chief athletic inspector in charge of training.
- 2) Specifies that, if CSAC employs an assistant chief athletic inspector in charge of training, the assistant chief athletic inspector in charge of training assists the chief athletic inspector in exercising the powers and performing the duties delegated by CSAC and authorized by the executive officer related to regulation of events.
- 3) Authorizes CSAC to enter into a contract with an approved sponsor to place the sponsor's name or logo, as approved by CSAC, on referee and ringside physician apparel.
- 4) Authorizes CSAC to enter into an agreement with an Indian tribe or a nonprofit organization to similarly display the name, logo, insignia, or brand, as approved by CSAC, of the Indian tribe or nonprofit organization.
- 5) Specifies that a contract or agreement entered into for displaying names and logos on apparel is at the discretion of CSAC subject to the following:
 - a) The Administrative Procedure Act (Chapter 3.5 (commencing with Section 11340) of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code).
 - b) The State Contracting Manual, the State Administrative Manual, the Public Contract Code, and the personal services contracting requirements.
 - c) Any other applicable bidding and state contracting requirement.
- 6) Specifies that payment received by CSAC for a sponsorship shall be distributed as follows:
 - a) Divide 75% of the payment between the Boxers' Pension Fund and the Mixed Martial Arts Retirement Benefit Fund in a manner that fairly represents the revenue derived from each segment, as determined by CSAC and set forth in the sponsorship contract.
 - b) Deposit 25% of the payment into the Athletic Commission Fund to be used for referee training, payment, and education.
- 7) Prohibits sponsorship contracts from the following:

- a) Promoting a sham or fake contest, as defined.
 - b) Promoting the use of prohibited or illegal substances.
- 8) Requires CSAC, before entering into a contract of agreement, to promulgate regulations establishing and describing the entire procurement lifecycle for contracts and agreements, including but not limited to the procedures for evaluating and selecting applicants, including the scoring methodology and each criterion used, the permissible provisions of the contracts and agreements, and the process, phases, and procedures used to ensure equity and transparency in the procurement lifecycle.
- 9) Defines purposes of the provisions under this bill:
- a) “Approved sponsor” means a sponsor for whom both of the following are true:
 - i) The sponsor is in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations pertaining to their business or profession.
 - ii) The sponsor does not have a financial interest in a licensee participating in, or the outcome of, a contest in which the sponsor’s name or approved logo appears pursuant to this section.
 - iii) “Indian tribe” means a federally recognized Indian tribe and any department, division, subdivision, agency, or arm, or instrumentality thereof.
 - iv) “Nonprofit organization” means a tax-exempt organization as defined under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
- 10) Specifies that a violation of the provisions under this bill is not a crime.

EXISTING LAW:

- 11) Regulates and licenses combat sports under the Boxing Act, which is also called the State Athletic Commission Act. (Business and Professions Code (BPC) Sections 18600-18887)
- 12) Establishes CSAC within the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) to administer and enforce the Boxing Act. (BPC 18602)
- 13) Prohibits unlicensed promotion or participation in boxing or martial contest, match, or exhibition and grants CSAC the sole direction, management, control of, and jurisdiction over all professional and amateur boxing, professional and amateur kickboxing, all forms and combinations of forms of full contact martial arts contests, including mixed martial arts and matches or exhibitions conducted, held, or given within this state. No event may take place without the prior approval of CSAC. (BPC 18640.5)
- 14) Requires CSAC to license referees, judges, matchmakers, and timekeepers (officials) and authorizes CSAC to license the clubs, assistant matchmakers, and corporate treasurers. (BPC 18641)

- 15) Authorizes the CSAC to license professional and amateur boxers, professional and amateur martial arts fighters, and booking agents, managers of professional boxers and professional martial arts fighters, trainers, chief seconds, and seconds of each, as specified. (BPC 18642)
- 16) Defines “club” and “promoter” synonymously to mean a corporation, partnership, association, individual, or other organization which conducts, holds, or gives a boxing or martial arts contest, match, or exhibition. (BPC 18622)
- 17) Defines a professional or amateur boxer or martial arts fighter as one who engages in a boxing or martial arts contest and possesses fundamental skills in their respective sport. (BPC 18623)
- 18) Defines “contest” and “match” synonymously to mean professional and amateur boxing, kickboxing, and martial arts exhibitions, and mean a fight, prizefight, boxing contest, pugilistic contest, kickboxing contest, martial arts contest, or sparring match, between two or more persons, where full contact is used or intended that may result or is intended to result in physical harm to the opponent. (BPC 18625(a))
- 19) Defines “martial arts” as any form of karate, kung fu, tae kwon do, kickboxing or any combination of full contact martial arts, including mixed martial arts, or self-defense conducted on a full contact basis where a weapon is not used. (BPC 18627(a))
- 20) Defines “kickboxing” as any form of boxing in which blows are delivered with the hand and any part of the leg below the hip, including the foot. (BPC 18627(b))
- 21) Defines “full contact” as the use of physical force in a martial arts contest that may result or is intended to result in physical harm to the opponent, including any contact that does not meet the definition of light contact or noncontact. (BPC 18627(c))
- 22) Defines "manager" to mean any individual or corporate principal who directs a professional fighter's career, arranges their contests, or receives more than 10 percent of their gross purse, except for licensed attorneys when legal representation. (BPC 18628)
- 23) Requires CSAC to establish the MMA Fund for licensed professional martial artists who engage in mixed martial arts contests in this state, as specified. (BPC 18888-18888.12)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. This measure has been keyed fiscal by Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

- 1) Author’s statement. According to the author, “Fighters step into the ring risking serious, lifelong injuries, yet many retire without the security athletes in other major sports have. AB 2130 takes a commonsense step to change that by allowing sponsor logos on referee apparel and directing most of that revenue to fighter retirement funds. It does not raise taxes or ticket prices. It simply ensures that when corporations profit from combat sports, fighters share in that success.”
- 2) Background. Professional boxing and mixed martial arts are physically demanding sports in which athletes face repeated head trauma, orthopedic injuries, and other long-term health risks. Elite MMA fighters have an average career length of 10 years, or on average 20 fights

before retiring. The physically demanding nature of the sport, and the risk of injury, means most fighters will only take on two to three fights per year to allow their body to recover.

Fighters assume significant physical risk during their careers, yet retirement funding mechanisms remain relatively limited. Current retirement funds rely largely on event assessments and regulatory fees, which fluctuate depending on the number of events held in a given year. At the same time, the sport continues to grow in popularity and commercial visibility. Sponsorship and brand partnerships are already integrated into many aspects of combat sports events, but there is currently no dedicated structure that connects a portion of that sponsorship activity directly to fighter retirement funds. Without an additional revenue source, retirement benefits may struggle to keep pace with the evolving commercial landscape of the sport.

- 3) CSAC. CSAC regulates most forms of professional and amateur combative sporting events, such as boxing and martial arts events, including MMA events. Specifically, CSAC regulates events where the use of full contact may result in physical harm to an opponent, including amateur contests where full contact may be unintentionally used.

The need for regulation is the inherent risk of harm in combative sporting contests, particularly when held for the entertainment of viewers. Left unregulated, contests may lack safety equipment, mismatch contestants, or, in the case of professionals, fail to pay the contestants. To that end, CSAC is tasked with ensuring that contestants who wish to participate in these sports may do so safely and fairly. This is done through the licensing of the fighters themselves, as well as the managers, corners, matchmakers, trainers, promoters, and officials.

- 4) CSAC funding. CSAC, like other DCA licensing boards, is a special fund entity and receives no support from the state general fund. It instead relies on revenues from licensing, administrative, and other regulatory fees to pay for its costs. However, the nature of CSAC's licenses differs from other DCA licensing boards. Other DCA licensing boards focus on the competence of practitioners that deliver professional services to consumers, and the workload related to ensuring that competence is recouped through license renewal fees.

CSAC only licenses fighters to ensure they have the skills to compete with other licensees safely. Instead, the bulk of CSAC's workload is the regulation of the events that profit from the fighters' participation. As such, CSAC primarily relies on fees on the revenues from the promoters of the events.

However, because the bulk of CSAC's revenue comes from the event fees, CSAC's solvency is dependent on the number and size of fights held in California, which is impossible to predict. As a result, CSAC's reserve has experienced extreme fluctuations. This bill may potentially provide a small offset for the volatility by supplementing the funding for referee training, payment, and education.

- 5) Boxing and MMA Retirement Funds. Many professional fighters compete full-time, potentially putting off other career or employment opportunities in the meantime. They may also compete on a contractual basis, which may leave them without the usual employer-sponsored benefits one may receive in other sectors, such as retirement benefits. Acknowledging this issue, California has established quasi-requirement payment programs

for boxers and martial artists. This bill seeks to provide additional funding for the Boxers' Pension Fund and the recently created MMA Fund.

- 6) Arguments in support. According to CSAC (Sponsor) in support, "Our Commission is responsible for protecting the health and safety of its licensees, including boxers, kickboxers, and other martial arts athletes. The Commission is responsible for implementing and enforcing the Federal Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act (Federal Boxing Act) and the California Boxing Act or State Athletic Commission Act (State Act). The Commission has four main functions: licensing, enforcement, regulating events, and administering the Professional Boxers' Pension Fund (Pension Plan) and Mixed Martial Arts Benefit Plan (MMA Benefit Plan).

"The Commission provides direction, management, and control for professional and amateur boxing, professional and amateur kickboxing, and all forms and combinations of full contact martial arts contests, including mixed martial arts (MMA) and matches or exhibitions conducted, held, or given in California.

"AB 2130 would grant the Commission explicit authority to enter into sponsorship agreements, thereby creating an additional and sustainable funding stream to support and enhance the long-term viability of the Pension Plan and the MMA Benefit Plan.

"These novel revenue opportunities would ensure that eligible athletes receive meaningful benefits during and after their athletic careers."

- 7) Double-referral. This measure was first referred to the Assembly Committee on Business and Professions, where it passed on a 19-0 vote.
- 8) Amendments and policy considerations. Amendments proposed by the committee would allow judges at CSAC events to also have sponsor names and logos on their apparel, and clarify that established regulations for contracts must be officially announced or published only to the extent they are not specifically required and made public pursuant to the State Contracting Manual, the State Administrative Manual, the Public Contract Code, or and the personal services contracting requirements.
- 9) Prior and related legislation:
- a) SB 1456 (Ashby), Chapter 486, Statutes of 2024, extended CSAC operations by four years to January 1, 2029, authorized CSAC to establish a process for approving competitors who test positive for hepatitis C, increased the minimum purse to \$200 and authorized CSAC to increase the amount by regulation, required an onsite ambulance to transport a competitor to the hospital if the ringside physician orders it, and increased the boxing pension plan ticket assessment.
 - b) AB 1136 (Haney), Chapter 466, Statutes of 2023, required CSAC to establish the MMA Fund.
 - c) AB 1703 (Carrillo), Chapter 591, Statutes of 2023, increased the cap on the amount of admission revenue that promoters must report from \$2,000,000 to \$4,000,000 and increased the cap on the gate revenue fee from \$100,000 to \$200,000.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California State Athletic Commission (Sponsor)
Association of Boxing Commission and Combative Sports
Association of Ringside Physicians
California Amateur Mixed Martial Arts Organization, INC. (CAMO)
Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC)
5 Individuals

Opposition

None on file.

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