

Oral Testimony of Oscar De La Hoya

Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Cantwell, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

My name is Oscar De La Hoya. I am a U.S. Olympic Gold Medalist, a six-division, 11-time world champion, and now run Golden Boy Promotions. I care deeply about boxing, and more importantly, about the fighters who step into the ring and risk their lives for our entertainment.

I'm here as a former fighter because I strongly believe the proposed changes to the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act take us in the wrong direction. Today, you will hear many different perspectives, some that may want to discredit the decades long work the sport's stakeholders have already done to create a safe sport that puts fighters first and creates a free marketplace for fighters to negotiate the best deals for their families and their personal legacy.

I grew up in East Los Angeles with very little. Boxing was my way out. When I won my gold medal at 18, I had promoters coming at me from every direction. My family and I didn't have access to legal advice, and I signed the first contract put in front of me without fully understanding it. It didn't take long to realize I had been taken advantage of. That experience is not unique. Many fighters enter this sport young, trusting, and without resources, and once they are locked into the wrong deal, it is very difficult to get out. That is exactly why the Ali Act exists.

I had the opportunity to work with Senator John McCain on this. As a national hero, a prisoner of war, and someone who loved boxing as a former Golden Gloves fighter, he understood the risks fighters take and the need to protect them. The Ali Act reflects that commitment to fairness and to protecting fighters from being taken advantage of.

Passed in 2000, the Ali Act addresses real problems including conflicts of interest, lack of transparency, and the exploitation of fighters. It creates a system designed to protect fighters and preserve a fair, open marketplace. Those protections still matter today.

The principal change of the proposed amendment allows a promoter to create an entity that serves as both promoter and governing body, a so-called "Unified Boxing Organization." This mirrors the existing MMA model and creates a closed system controlling rankings, titles, and access to opportunity.

Under this structure, as long as the UBO complies with its own internal rules, it would not violate the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act. Meanwhile, traditional promoters, like myself, would still be required to comply with full financial disclosure and reporting requirements.

In other words, one system operates under transparency and accountability, while the UBOs do not. This is a fundamental shift in power that if changed would put corporate profits first, fighters second. We should be clear about who benefits from this.

These changes align directly with what Zuffa Boxing and its leadership at TKO Group Holdings have already said they intend to build in boxing, a model similar to the UFC. And we already know what that model looks like and it does not work for fighters. The UFC and its parent company agreed to a \$375 million antitrust settlement after fighters accused them of suppressing wages and restricting competition.

At the same time, Zuffa boxing is fully funded by Saudi Arabia. We've already seen how that kind of funding reshaped another sport through LIV Golf. We should be honest about what is happening here. That was sportswashing, a clear effort to use sports to reshape reputations. Now, players who were drawn in by the money are trying to come back to the PGA Tour since the league will lose \$5 Billion in Saudi-funding. This should serve as a warning.

Transparency is just as critical. In current Zuffa contracts, fighters are locked into rigid earning structures with little to no ability to negotiate. Zuffa controls all major revenue streams including media rights, ticket sales, and sponsorships, while fighters are limited to guaranteed purses and discretionary bonuses, with only narrow participation in upside revenue. As independent contractors, fighters won't have leverage when one system controls all opportunities. Under current law, fighters already have the right to see the financials behind the events they headline, giving them a fair opportunity to negotiate their compensation.

I also want to address safety. The proposed changes suggest improved protections, but boxing already has strong safeguards in place and existing protections, including health insurance for injuries and life insurance for fighters' families. Commissions and promoters ensure fighters are medically cleared and cover related medical costs.

If this proposal is truly about protecting fighters, why are MMA athletes not included at all? They compete in a similarly dangerous sport, yet they are completely excluded.

That raises serious concerns about whether this is truly about protection or about restructuring control of boxing. Fighters deserve to come first, shareholder profits second.

Fighters deserve real protection and real opportunity - not have to fight the system as well.

If this bill passes, fighters will have fewer choices, less leverage, and less control over their careers.

And when that happens, it will not be the sport that failed them.

It will be us.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions.