



Illinois Department of Professional Regulation

NEWS

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Illinois Department of Professional Regulation Knocks Down Toughman event in Springfield

Springfield – Less than two weeks after announcing hard-hitting new rules against “Toughman” competitions, the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation shut down an event in Springfield Tuesday night..

“We will not allow these organized street fights anywhere in Illinois,” said Fernando Grillo, Director of the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation (IDPR).

IDPR worked with the Sangamon County State’s Attorneys Office, the Springfield Police Department and the Illinois Liquor Control Commission in shutting down a Toughman show at Club 217, 3075 Normandy Road, Springfield.

“Gov. Blagojevich has made stopping Toughman a top priority, and many local law enforcement officers who have been appalled by these events have welcomed his leadership on this issue,” Grillo said.

Toughman competitions feature often untrained and unconditioned fighters pummel each other, have led to at least dozen deaths across the country. At least 12 people have died after participating in Toughman contests across the country, including Stacy Young, a 30-year-old mother of two from Florida who climbed into the ring at an event last year against an opponent with vastly more experience. (Video of this tragic event is available at: http://www.jameshoyer.com/news_toughman.html.)

Gov. Blagojevich, a former Golden Gloves boxer, instructed the IDPR to take quick action in strengthening rules in the Boxing Act to prevent two scheduled Toughman competitions from taking place in Peoria and Rockford in February.

“Only professional fights approved and regulated by the Department of Professional Regulation, amateur fights approved by USA Boxing and Golden Gloves, and bona fide kickboxing and martial arts

tournaments will be allowed in this state,” Grillo said. “We will diligently pursue any events that fall outside the scope of these new regulations to ensure the safety of the public.”

Unauthorized fighting events pose serious health risks to those involved because they:

- Do not always require boxers to undergo a pre-fight physical;
- Do not test competitors for HIV;
- Do not prevent inebriated fighters from entering the ring;

Offer only a few weight classes so that competitors can be 100 pounds or more apart in size;

- Pair trained and untrained fighters;
- Offer inadequate medical care and physician oversight.

The rule changes will tighten definitions in the Boxing Act regarding banned fighting events, including Toughman. Previously, promoters characterized their events as “kickboxing” competitions to exploit a loophole in the Boxing Act and avoid sanctions. Legitimate kickboxing and martial arts events were, and remain, exempt from “ultimate fighting” (Toughman) restrictions.

The new regulations will require promoters and participants to abide by the same rules professional boxing does, such as using stringent class and weight measurements in pairing fighters, and mandating that unlicensed one-and two-day elimination tournaments be sanctioned by reputable organizations like the Golden Gloves of America and the U.S. Amateur Boxing Federation.

Illinois joins 14 other states in banning or severely restricting these types of competitions. Another five states are considering similar action.

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