

BOXING, MARTIAL ARTS, AND PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING ADVISORY BOARD

**Wednesday, April 8, 2026 – 10:00 a.m.
2nd Floor – Board Room 3**

**Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation
9960 Mayland Drive
Richmond, Virginia 23233**

Mission: Our mission is to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public by licensing qualified individuals and businesses enforcing standards of professional conduct for professions and occupations as designated by statute.

I. CALL TO ORDER

- a. Emergency Evacuation Procedures
- b. Determination of Quorum

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. BMAW Board Meeting, February 26, 2026

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD *FIVE MINUTE PUBLIC COMMENT, PER PERSON*

V. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Regulatory Update
- b. Muhammad Ali Act Update
- c. Armor Martial Arts Update
- d. Redneck Brawls Update
- e. Dirty Boxing Update
- f. Transgender Update
- g. Celebration of Occupations

VI. OTHER BUSINESS

- a. 2026 Event Update
- b. Licensed Population
- c. Board Member Training

VII. COMPLETE CONFLICT OF INTEREST FORM AND TRAVEL VOUCHER

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED FOR **WEDNESDAY, JULY 21, 2026, at 1 PM**

- ❖ Agenda materials made available to the public do not include disciplinary case files or application files pursuant to §54.1-108 of the Code of Virginia.
- ❖ Five minute public comment, per person, with the exception of any open disciplinary or application file.
- ❖ Persons desiring to participate in the meeting and requiring special accommodations or interpretative services should contact the Department at (804) 367-2785 at least ten days prior to the meeting so that suitable arrangements can be made for an appropriate accommodation. The Department fully complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

BOXING, MARTIAL ARTS, AND
PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

The Boxing, Martial Arts, and Professional Wrestling Advisory Board (BMAW) met on February 26, 2026, at the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR), 9960 Mayland Drive, Richmond, Virginia.

Members present for all or part of the meeting:

Wrestling

Brandon Metheny

Martial Arts

Brian Pisani

Citizen

Ellen Thacker

Samuel Nicholson

Boxing

Mark D’Atillio

Members absent from the meeting with regrets:

Martial Arts

Jerome Wilson

Boxing

Eric Irizarry

Staff present for all or part of the meeting were:

Laura McClintock, Director
Steve Kirschner, LRPD Director
Kate Nosbisch, Executive Director
Jermaine L. Gray, Commissioner
Davon Jones, Administrative Coordinator
Kyle Mathews, Regulatory Operations Administrator
Jennifer Sayegh, Policy and Legislation Affairs Manager

Barbers and Cosmetology, Hearing Aid Specialists and Opticians Section:

Ashley Reed, Executive Director
Wendy Duncan, Licensing Operations Administrator

Josh Laws, Senior Assistant Attorney General with the Office of the Attorney General, was present at the meeting.

Tim Taylor, Board for Professional and Occupational Regulations Liaison, was not present at the meeting with regrets.

Mr. Metheny, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. A quorum was present to conduct official Board business. **Call to Order**

Mr. Metheny and Ms. Nosbisch advised the Board of the emergency evacuation procedures. **Emergency Evacuation Procedures**

Mr. D’Atillo, moved to approve the agenda. Ms. Thacker seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by: D’Atillio, Metheny, Nicholson, Thacker, and Pisani.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. D’Atillo, moved to approve July 30, 2025, Advisory Board Meeting minutes. Ms. Thacker seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by: D’Atillio, Metheny, Nicholson, Thacker, and Pisani.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Nosbisch welcomed and introduced Ms. Laura McClintock as the new Director, Mr. Sam Nicholson as the new Citizen Board Member and Mr. Kyle Mathews as the new Regulatory Operations Administrator. Ms. Nosbisch introduced observers from another DPOR board. Board members, DPOR staff, and Counsel introduced themselves.

Welcome and Introductions

There were no public comments.

Public Comment Period

Mr. Mathews presented to the Board that the general regulatory review of the Boxing, Martial Arts, and Professional Wrestling regulations remained in progress. He also reported that the fee adjustment action was currently on hold until further notice. Staff reviewed the legislative amendments reflected in HB 2573/SB 1245 and noted that the changes became effective November 19, 2025.

Regulatory Update

Ms. Sayegh provided a legislative update on the current General Assembly session, including agency legislation affecting DPOR boards. She summarized proposed changes to the Callahan Act fee-setting process under HB 796/SB 680, including annual fee assessments, streamlined regulatory procedures, and related oversight requirements, as well as cost-recovery provisions for disciplinary actions. She also reviewed HB 1305, which would expand deferred disposition authority for minor or first-time violations.

General Assembly Update

Mr. Gray provided the Board an informational update on proposed federal legislation, the Muhammad Ali Revival Act (HR 4624), including potential additional medical and drug testing requirements. The Board discussed possible impacts on smaller promotions and noted federal preemption if enacted. No action was taken, and the matter will remain on a future agenda for monitoring.

Muhammad Ali Act

Ms. Nosbisch advised the Board to consider how existing regulations and statutory definitions apply to emerging and non-traditional contest formats. Staff reviewed the applicable provisions and referenced prior Board discussions on similar classifications.

Regulations Regarding Item E, F, G

Mr. Gray provided the Board information regarding Armor Medieval Martial Arts event. The Board reviewed materials and discussed whether the activity falls within the statutory definitions of boxing, professional wrestling, or mixed martial arts. Mr. Laws advised that, due to the use of weapons and statutory limitations, the activity does not appear to fall within the Board's jurisdiction and may require legislative authorization if pursued as a professional event. The Board also discussed event format, safety considerations, and amateur versus professional oversight distinctions.

**Armor Medieval
Martial Arts**

Mr. Metheny moved that Armor Medieval Martial Arts be recognized as an amateur competition. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by: D'Atillio, Metheny, Nicholson, Thacker, and Pisani.

Mr. Gray provided the Board information regarding the Redneck Brawls event. The Board discussed its proposed format, participant screening, and medical requirements. Discussion focused on the distinction between amateur and professional status, particularly where compensation is involved. Mr. Laws referenced statutory definitions of professional participation, and the Board considered how the activity might be categorized and regulated under existing authority.

Redneck Brawls

Ms. Thacker moved to obtain the promoter's rules and regulations and direct staff to review and return with a recommendation regarding classification and appropriate regulatory category for the Director's consideration. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by: D'Atillio, Metheny, Nicholson, Thacker, and Pisani.

Mr. Gray provided the Board with information regarding the Dirty Boxing event. The Board reviewed a proposed rule set for "Dirty Boxing," described as a modified stand-up contest permitting strikes beyond traditional boxing. Discussion focused on whether the activity meets the statutory definition of boxing and whether use of the term "boxing" presents legal concerns if inconsistent with statutory requirements. Mr. Laws advised that the designation may raise statutory issues, and staff noted the need to confirm participant compensation and intended classification of amateur or professional.

Dirty Boxing

Mr. Metheny moved to direct staff to contact the promoter to confirm whether participants are paid and to notify the promoter of the relevant statutory concern regarding naming/designation for the Board's consideration. Mr. Pisani seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by: D'Atillio, Metheny, Nicholson, Thacker, and Pisani.

The Board recessed from 11:43 a.m. to 12:07 p.m.

Recess

Mr. Laws departed the meeting at 12:08 p.m.

Departure of Counsel

Ms. Nosbisch reported implementation of updated vendor agreements for event officials and that the revised agreements eliminate routine expirations while allowing termination by either party. Mr. Gray noted that Agreements will be reviewed biannually, with updates required only for status changes. Mr. Gray also noted regulatory changes reducing prior licensure requirements for ringside physicians to expand eligibility and recruitment. Required documentation includes current licensure verification, controlled substance registration, and malpractice insurance.

Official Contract

Ms. Nosbisch and Mr. Gray provided an update on the proposed San Shou Challenge event, including safety concerns related to the raised platform. The promoter agreed to limit the platform height to three feet and add additional matting. No event date has been set, and staff advised that additional training may be required for officials prior to the event.

**San Shou Challenge
Event Update**

Mr. Gray provided the Board with an event recap and multi-year trend overview, including the increased volume of boxing, MMA, bare knuckle, and professional wrestling events during the last several years. Discussion addressed post-COVID recovery, promoter activity, and operational impacts. Staff explained that the elimination of second weigh-ins contributed to increased interest and alignment with broader industry standards, particularly for boxing. The Board discussed the high volume of wrestling events, noting that wrestling is scripted entertainment and DPOR cannot have a presence at every wrestling event due to the volume. The boxing/MMA events have different regulatory requirements and involves wide variability in venue size and attendance.

2025 Event Recap

Mr. Gray provided the Board with information on an event-level financial overview comparing direct costs and revenues for boxing, MMA, and bare-knuckle events. Wrestling events were excluded due to minimal direct staffing expenses. The Board discussed the impact of indirect program costs and emphasized the importance of attracting larger national events to support overall financial health.

2026 Event Update

Mr. Gray provided the Board with an update on topics discussed at the 2025 ABC Conference, including evolving medical and safety standards, proposed uniform hand wrap requirements, updates to MMA rule interpretations (including grounded opponent revisions), and officiating training considerations.

**Association of Boxing
Commission 2025
Conference Update**

Mr. Gray informed the Board that the 2026 ABC Conference is scheduled for July 31st through August 6th in Orlando, Florida and emphasized the importance of continued national collaboration and regulatory consistency among state commissions and tribal authorities.

**Association of Boxing
Commission 2026
Conference Information**

The licensee counts as of February 18, 2026:

Temporary Boxing	00
Boxers	07
Boxing/Wrestling Promoters	17
Trainers, Seconds, Cutmen	17
Boxing/Wrestling Managers	27
Boxing/Wrestling Matchmakers	02
Boxing Events	16
Martial Artists	07
Temporary Wrestler	00
Wrestlers	201
Wrestling Events	06

Licensed Population

Ms. Nosbisch and Mr. Gray provided an informational update on cross-gender and transgender participation in combat sports, including a summary of state approaches and national discussions. The Board discussed safety considerations and noted the absence of a current Virginia policy, acknowledging the need for clearer guidance in the future.

**Transgender Fighting
Update**

Ms. Nosbisch conducted election of officers. Mr. Pisani moved to nominate Mr. Metheny to continue as Chair. Mr. D’Atillio seconded. As there were no other nominations from the floor, nominations were closed and the nomination of Mr. Metheny was unanimously approved by: D’Atillio, Metheny, Nicholson, Thacker, and Pisani.

Election of Officers

Mr. D’Atillio moved to nominate Mr. Pisani to Vice Chair. Mr. Metheny seconded. As there were no other nominations from the floor, nominations were closed and the nomination of Mr. Pisani was unanimously approved by: D’Atillio, Metheny, Nicholson, Thacker, and Pisani.

Mr. Kirschner recommended that, due to the length of the meeting, Board Member Training can be deferred to the next scheduled meeting. By consensus, the Board agreed to defer the training to the next scheduled meeting.

**Board Member
Training**

Conflict of Interest forms and Travel Vouchers were completed by all Board members present.

**Conflict of Interest
Forms / Travel
Vouchers**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:15 p.m.

Adjourn

Brandon Metheny, Chair

Laura V. McClintock, Secretary

DRAFT AGENDA
Materials contained in this agenda are proposed topics for discussion
And are not to be construed as regulation or official board position.
DRAFT AGENDA

TRANSGENDER ATHLETES IN COMBAT SPORTS: TO FIGHT OR NOT TO FIGHT?

Nitin K Sethi, MD, MBBS, FAAN

Associate Professor of Neurology

Chief Medical Officer, New York State Athletic Commission (NYSAC)

Secretary, The Association of Ringside Physicians

Editor-in Chief, The ARP Journal of Combat Sports Medicine

sethinitinmd@hotmail.com

QUICK QUESTION/POLL..



- How many of you would allow a transgender woman to fight a cisgender woman?
- How many of you would allow a transgender male to fight a cisgender male?

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Transgender definition

- At times referred to as trans
- Have a gender identity or gender expression that differs from the sex that they were assigned at birth.
- When transgender people with medical assistance transition from one sex to another-they are referred to as transsexual.
- Two broad category-trans men and trans women. Umbrella term and may also include people who are non-binary or genderqueer. The term very broadly may include cross-dressers.
- No universally accepted definition, including among researchers.
- Transgender is distinct from sexual orientation. Transgender people may identify as heterosexual (straight), homosexual (gay or lesbian), bisexual, asexual, or otherwise, or may decline to label their sexual orientation.
- Opposite of *transgender* is *cisgender* (persons whose gender identity matches their assigned sex).
- Many transgender people experience gender dysphoria, and seek medical treatments including hormone replacement therapy (HRT), sex reassignment surgery, or psychotherapy

Source: Wikipedia (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transgender>)

Transgender athletes

- One of the most polarizing issues in sports over the last few years has been the debate over transgender athletes:
 - What are the rights of transgender athletes?
 - Who is allowed to compete as a woman in women's sports?
 - Who is allowed to compete as a male against cisgender males?



Transgender swimsuit model on Sports Illustrated cover: 'We deserve this moment'



Leyna Bloom (Source: The Hill <https://thehill.com/blogs/in-the-know/in-the-know/563947-transgender-swimsuit-model-on-sports-illustrated-cover-we/>)

Different rules and policies for transgender athletes across different sports



Source: <https://www.ktvb.com/article/news/local/208/ncaa-transgender-athlete-policy-update/277-5fc6de4d-c9d9-409c-91cc-15930a58dd2e>

Different rules and policies for transgender athletes across different sports

NCAA Policy on Transgender Student-Athlete Participation

The following policies clarify participation of transgender student-athletes undergoing hormonal treatment for gender transition:

1. A trans male (FTM) student-athlete who has received a medical exception for treatment with testosterone for diagnosed Gender Identity Disorder or gender dysphoria and/or Transsexualism, for purposes of NCAA competition may compete on a men's team, but is no longer eligible to compete on a women's team without changing that team status to a mixed team.
2. A trans female (MTF) student-athlete being treated with testosterone suppression medication for Gender Identity Disorder or gender dysphoria and/or Transsexualism, for the purposes of NCAA competition may continue to compete on a men's team but may not compete on a women's team without changing it to a mixed team status until completing one calendar year of testosterone suppression treatment.⁸

- *Source: Transgender inclusion in athletics.*
<https://gradynews.uga.edu/transgender-inclusion-in-athletics/>



Different rules and policies for transgender athletes across different sports

- International Olympic Committee (IOC) guidelines require that all trans women athletes declare their gender and not change that assertion for at least four years, as well as have a testosterone level of less than 10 nanomoles per liter for at least one year prior to competition and throughout the period of eligibility.



INTERNATIONAL
OLYMPIC
COMMITTEE

TRANSGENDER ATHLETES AND SPORTS: MAIN ISSUE

- Should transgender women compete in women's sports?
- Will a transgender athlete have an unfair advantage over the cisgender woman competitor (s)?
- Does higher testosterone level, differences in body fat, musculature and bony structure are some of the reasons postulated to give the transgender woman an advantage over her cisgender competitor?

Transgender athletes and combat sports: main issues

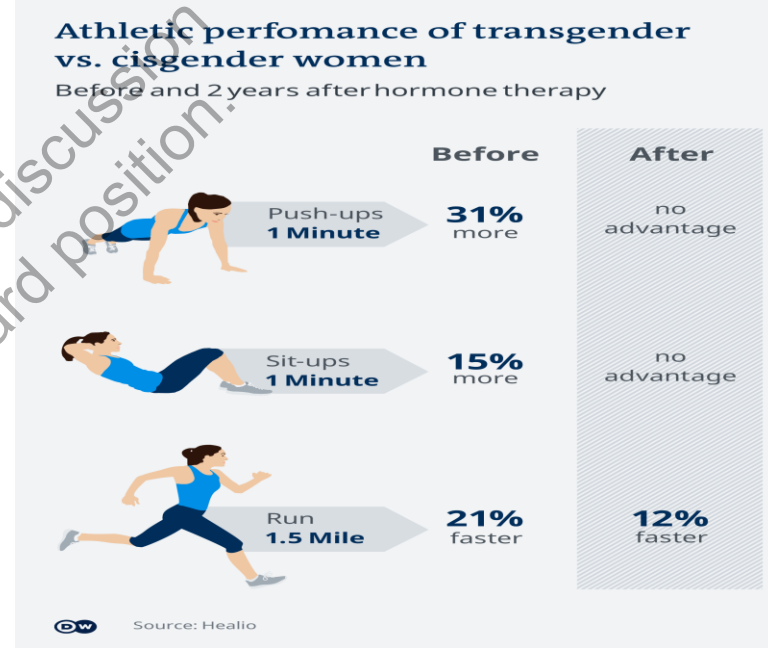
- SHOULD A TRANSGENDER WOMAN BE GRANTED LICENSURE TO FIGHT A CISGENDER WOMAN IN A PROFESSIONAL BOXING OR MMA BOUT?
- IS IT A FAIR BOUT?
- IS IT A SAFE BOUT?



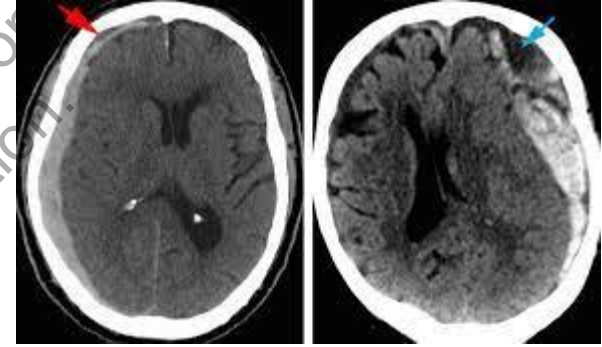
MAIN CONCERNS:

- Is this a fair bout?

- Arguments against-While testosterone can be used as metric to ensure fairness at the time of the bout, many would argue that by a time a transgender woman combatant launches her professional career she has already gone through male puberty thus conferring her with the musculature and bony structure of a male. So, a transgender woman combatant has an unfair advantage over her cisgender woman combatant.
- Arguments for: genetic differences are found in athletes of the same sex. Muscle build, joint flexibility, speed, and agility are variable traits which gives one athlete an advantage or disadvantage over the opponent (s). These innate genetic traits along with intense physical training, physical and mental stamina is what gives a combatant an edge over a competitor. It is what distinguishes a champion from a runner up in combat sports.



MAIN CONCERNS:



- Is this a safe bout (with respect to medical concerns)?
 - Arguments against: Combat sports such as boxing are unique since every punch thrown at the head is thrown with the intention of winning by causing a knockout (aka a concussion). Resulting these sports carry an exceedingly high risk for both acute and chronic neurological injuries. Boxers have died during a bout or in the immediate aftermath due to traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) such as an acute subdural hematoma (SDH), epidural hematoma (EDH), subarachnoid hemorrhage (SAH), intracranial hematoma and injury to the great vessels of the neck such as carotid or vertebral artery dissection.
Allowing a transgender woman to compete raises concern for the health and safety of her cisgender woman combatant.

Concerns/issues with respect to trans men athletes

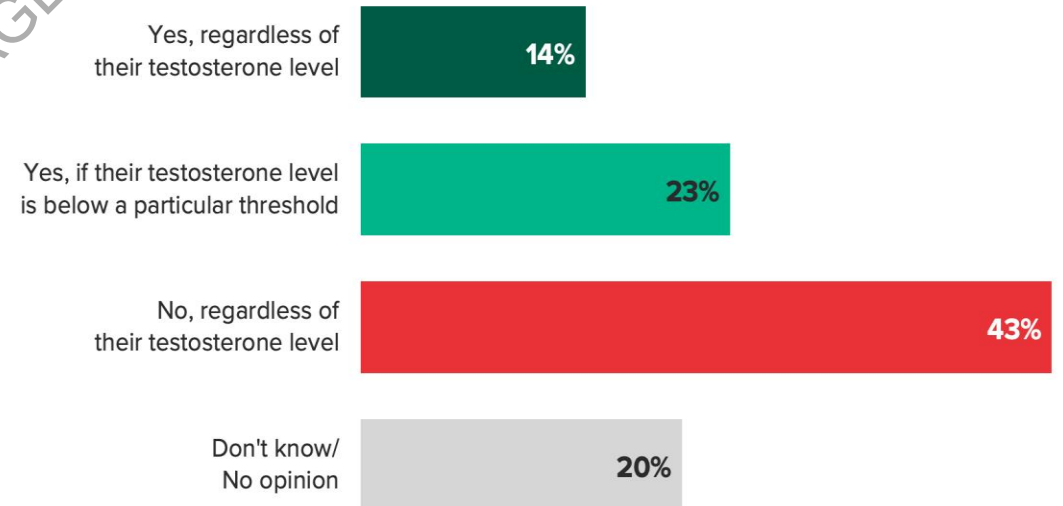
- IOC allows trans men athletes (athletes who transitioned from female to male) to participate without any restriction.
- Should a transgender man be granted licensure to fight a cisgender man in a professional boxing or MMA bout?
 - Is this a fair bout?
 - While testosterone can again be used as metric to ensure fairness at the time of the bout, many would argue that by a time a transgender man combatant launches his professional career he has already gone through female puberty thus conferring him with the musculature and bony structure of a female.
 - Such a combatant may be at a disadvantage against his cisgender man combatant.
 - Allowing this bout to take place raises concern for the health and safety of the transgender male combatant.
 - However, in the case of a trans male with a superior skill set, better training and superior mental and physical stamina than his cisgender male opponent, is a trans male athlete really at risk of injury competing in this scenario?

Source: Sethi NK, Khabie V. Transgender athletes in combat sports: to fight or not to fight? ARP Journal of Combat Sports Medicine. Volume 3 Issue 2.

TRANSGENDER ATHLETES IN SPORTS

43% of U.S. Adults Say Trans Women Should Never Be Allowed to Compete Against Other Female Athletes

U.S. adults were asked whether transgender women should be allowed to compete against other female athletes

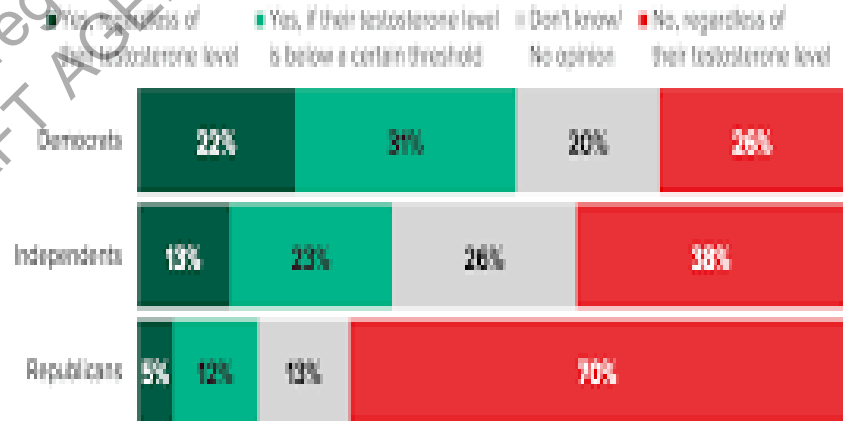


- POLARIZING TOPIC!!!

TRANSGENDER ATHLETES IN SPORTS

More Than Half of Democrats Support Allowing Transgender Women to Compete in Women's Sports

42% adults were asked whether transgender women should be allowed to compete against other female athletes



MONITOR CONSULT

Full conducted July 9-11, 2021, among 4,388 U.S. adults, with a margin of error of +/- 3%.

Polarizing topic !!!

TRANSGENDER ATHLETES IN COMBAT SPORTS: TO FIGHT OR NOT TO FIGHT?

- Polarizing topic with no easy answers.
- Needs to be debated, scientifically studied, and decided purely on scientific and medical grounds based on concrete evidence-based medicine with the foremost goal of protecting the health and safety of all combatants.
- GOAL OF ALL CONCERNED PARTIES SHOULD BE-
 - TO HAVE TWO EQUALLY SKILLED AND MATCHED ATHLETES COMPETING IN THE CAGE OR RING, ON A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD.
 - KEEP THE MATCHES FAIR, COMPETITIVE, ENTERTAINING, AND SAFE FOR ALL COMBATANTS.



CONCLUSIONS

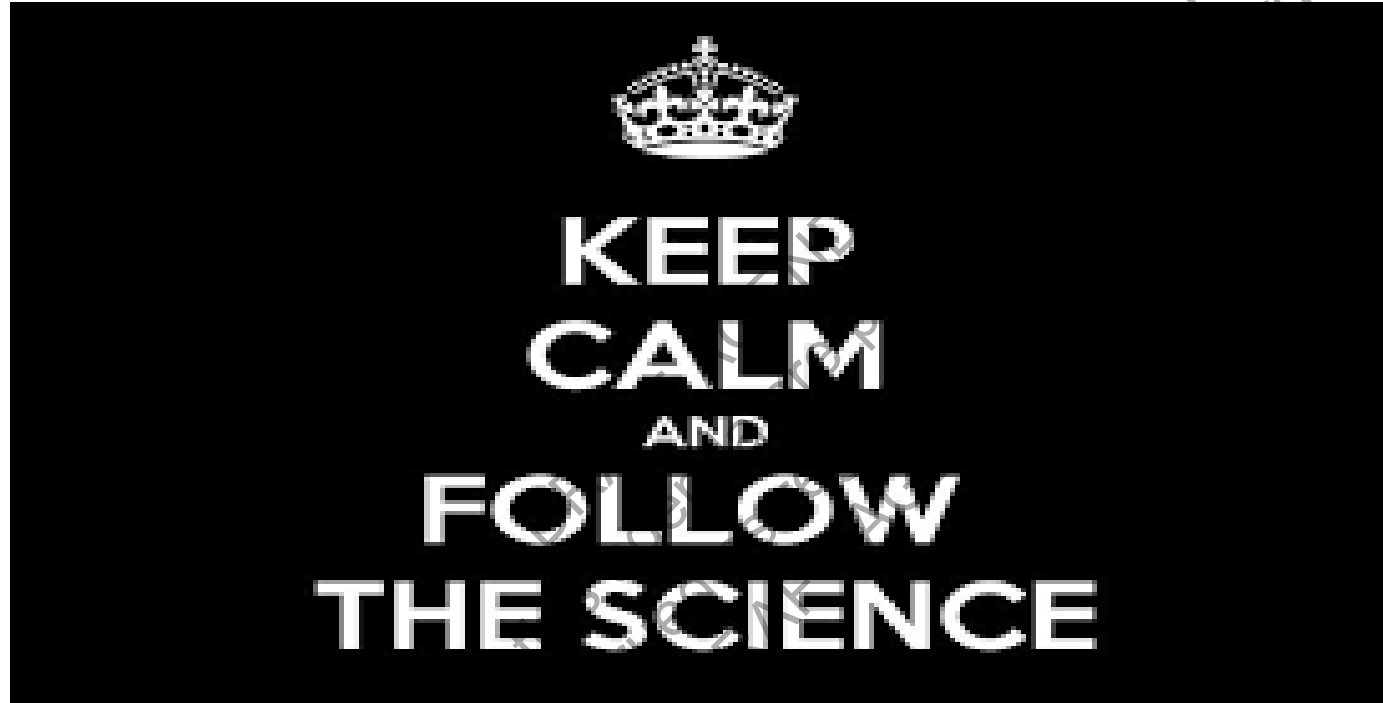
- While we debate “to fight or not to fight”, the combat sports community should support transgender rights.
- Transgender rights is an important issue which the combat sports community should not turn its back on.
- The combat sports community should recognize the gender identity of an individual and champion to protect transgender individuals against discrimination at their workplace, in employment, education and access to healthcare.



TRANS
RIGHTS
are

HUMAN
RIGHTS

CONCLUSIONS-TO FIGHT OR NOT TO FIGHT?



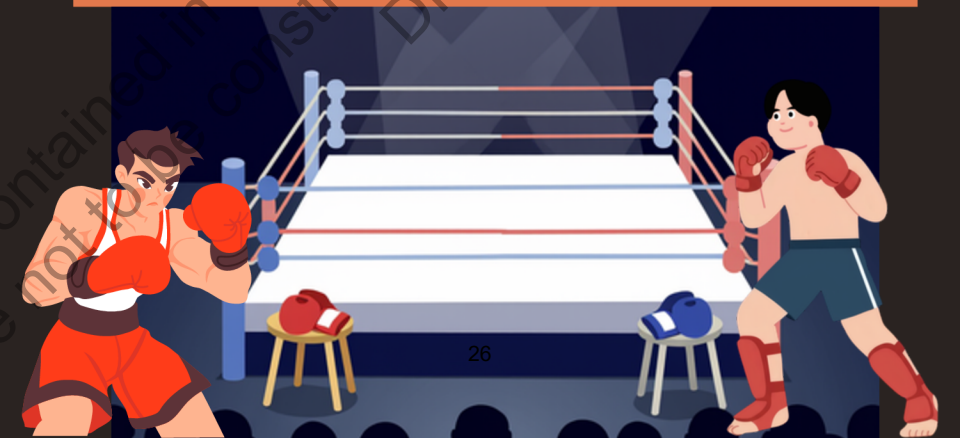
*...IF WE FOLLOW THE SCIENCE WE SHALL HAVE
OUR ANSWER...*



2026

Celebrating BMAW Professions Day/Week

World Wrestling Day - May 23, 2026
International Boxing Day - August 27, 2026
World Taekwondo Day - September 4, 2026
World Karate Day - October 25, 2026
World Judo Day - October 28, 2026
World Martial Arts Day - November 27, 2026



Upcoming Events Listing

DPOR licenses promoters and participants involved in **professional** wrestling, boxing, and martial arts events. The list of upcoming events includes only approved, licensed, and professional events.

If an event is not listed, it has not been licensed by DPOR to take place. Events may not be advertised until approved and licensed by DPOR.

Mixed Martial Arts:

April 25, 2026, Stronghold Promotions, Richmond Raceway, Richmond, VA

Boxing:

April 4, 2026, DB3 Boxing Promotions, The Chartway Arena, Norfolk, VA

April 18, 2026, Cujo's Toe to Toe Boxing, Caesars Virginia Casino, Danville, VA

May 9, 2026, Lucky Punch Promotions, Boys & Girls Club, Danville, VA

May 29, 2026, Brikhouse Boxing Productions, Rivers Casino, Portsmouth, VA

October 10, 2026, Cujo's Toe to Toe Boxing, Crosswhite Athletic Club, Lynchburg, VA

Wrestling:

March 28, 2026, Pure Pro Wrestling, Montvale Rec Club, Montvale, VA

March 28, 2026, National Independent Championship Wrestling, Stuart Rotary Memorial Building, Stuart, VA

March 29, 2026, Mid-Atlantic Territory Wrestling, Chef's Market, Newport News, VA

April 10, 2026, RVA Pro Wrestling, Hardywood Park Craft Brewery, Richmond, VA

April 10, 2026, Pure Pro Wrestling, Horsepasture Vol. Fire Dept., Ridgeway, VA

April 11, 2026, Mid Atlantic Territory Wrestling, Body by D Gymnasium, Yorktown, VA

April 11, 2026, All Star Entertainment, Pearisburg Community Center, Pearisburg, VA

April 12, 2026, Micro Wrestling Federation, Log Home Brewing Company, Spotsylvania, VA

April 13, 2026, Micro Wrestling Federation, Seaside Bar & Grill, Virginia Beach, VA

April 17, 2026, Micro Wrestling Federation, Shipgarten, McLean, VA

April 18, 2026, Pure Pro Wrestling, Franklin County YMCA, Rocky Mount, VA

April 24, 2026, Midget Wrestling, Rai's Rendezvous, Ashburn, VA

April 24, 2026, RVA Pro Wrestling, Carmax Park, Richmond, VA

April 24, 2026, Independent Professional Wrestling Association, Python Castle, Norfolk, VA

April 25, 2026, Midget Wrestling, Rai's Rendezvous, Ashburn, VA

April 27, 2026, Micro Wrestling Federation, The Hangout, Roanoke, VA

April 29, 2026, All Elite Wrestling, Eagle Bank Arena, Fairfax, VA

May 2, 2026, Southern Appalachian Wrestling, Rose Hill Elementary School, Rose Hill, VA

May 15, 2026, Micro Wrestling Federation, Backseat Events, Winchester, VA

May 29, 2026, All Star Entertainment Wrestling, A.R. Matthews Memorial Park, St. Paul, VA

June 20, 2026, Micro Wrestling Federation, John Moxie Stadium, Staunton, VA

July 1, 2026, Midget Wrestling, The Salisbury Center, Manassas, VA

Amateur martial arts/MMA must be conducted under an approved Amateur Sanctioning Organization. (Amateur boxing and amateur wrestling are not regulated.)

Events as of 4/1/2026

Total BMAW Population by Month

Profession		1/1/2026	2/1/2026	3/1/2026
Boxers		3	14	36
Boxing/Wrestling Promoters		9	17	24
Box/Wrest Trainers, Seconds, Cutmen		5	27	44
Boxing/Wrestling Managers		1	2	3
Boxing/Wrestling Matchmakers		6	16	22
Boxing/ MMA Events		6	7	7
Martial Artists		6	7	7
Temporary Wrestler		0	0	0
Wrestlers		93	201	350
Wrestling Events		2	6	11

DRAFT AGENDA
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